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IF I WERE YOU

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY
LUCILE SAWYER

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NEW YORK
SAMUEL FRENCH
PUBLISHER
25 WEST 45TH STREET

LONDON
SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD.
26 SOUTHAMPTON STREET
STRAND, W.C.2

812

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

JOHN BLAKE: *Age, thirty years. A man who will give advice, and tells you the truth.*

JAMES HARLOW: *Age, thirty years. John's partner. A man who tells you what you want to hear.*

JOSHUA TILLINGHAST: *Age, fifty-five years. A farmer, who counts his pennies.*

WILLIAM PETTINGILL: *Age, twenty-five years. Real estate man, with imagination.*

PERCY WEBB: *Age, twenty-two years. Dorothy's brother—yearns for solitude.*

DEWITT CLINTON: *Age, twenty-three years. City chap.*

EDWARD CLINTON: *Age, fifty years. Business man.*

DOROTHY WEBB: *Age, twenty years.*

ANNIE LOWELL: *Age, eighteen years.*

MINERVA TILLINGHAST: *Age, fifty years.*

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I. *Blake & Harlow's dress, coat and millinery store in Elmville, a small town on Long Island, one hundred miles out from New York.*

TIME: *A morning in March.*

ACT II. *Webb & Blake's tea room on East 72nd St., New York.*

TIME: *July 1st.*

ACT III. *The Same.*

TIME: *October 1st.*

IF I WERE YOU

ACT I

TIME: *A morning in late March.*

SCENE: *The coat, dress and millinery store of John Blake & James Harlow. The front of the store faces Main Street.*

Door in center, bearing the inscription:

BLAKE & HARLOW
Coats, Dresses, Millinery

The same inscription in large letters is on each of the plate glass windows.

The one on right extends across the entire width of the store.

On the left, the window is cut off to allow for a fitting room, the front of which runs parallel with the front of the store, about ten feet deep.

Windows boarded part way up in back; fitted with sliding doors so that stock in window cannot be seen from inside.

The front of the store is imposing, boasting the largest plate glass windows in the town. The back of the store is the front of the stage.

Rows of suits, coats, skirts and dresses hang in parallel rows from front to back of store.

On the left lower side dressing table, chair in front, hand mirror tied to side of table.

Couple of extra chairs between table and center front.

Near left wall long counter or table with hats on it.

Mirror back of counter.

Fitted in boxes underneath, containing hats.

Long, three-sided swivel mirror stands between dressing table and counter.

Upper back, on left side, fitting room, entrance facing back of the store.

Broad aisle down center of store, in front of door.

Right side, about center, door leads to office, on which is lettered:

BLAKE & HARLOW

Office

Private

When the curtain rises ANNIE LOWELL is L. arranging some new stock, putting it on hangers, pausing to hold a skirt or two out admiringly.

ANNIE LOWELL is a very pretty girl of eighteen, bright, pert and attractive, dressed in city style, bobbed hair. A rather fresh type of country girl, but lovable.

After a moment JAMES HARLOW enters from the office.

He is a bright, aggressive man of about thirty, diplomatic and very suave in his manner. The type of man you like to tell you what you want to hear, even if it is not the truth. This morning, however, it is evident from his manner that something has started the day wrong with him.

He is flashily dressed, in a large checked suit.

He has some price tags in his hand. He crosses to ANNIE and holds out the tags.

He catches ANNIE as she is holding a skirt up against herself, pirouetting before the mirror.

She starts as she sees him, and instantly becomes very busy.

He hands her the tags.

JAMES. (*Speaking in a slightly cross tone*) Look lively, Annie. I want to get that new stock tagged this morning. Friday is *supposed* to be our busy day. (*Goes behind counter.*)

ANNIE. (*Pertly*) Every day has been my busy day lately.

JAMES. (*Sharply*) That will do, Annie.

ANNIE. (*After a moment, conciliatingly holds out a bright blue skirt*) I think this skirt is just too lovely.

JAMES. (*In a slightly mollified voice*) Do you?

ANNIE. Oh, yes. (*Pause*) I think Mr. Blake has the most wonderful taste in buying.

JAMES. (*Quickly*) I selected that line.

ANNIE. You do like bright colors.

JAMES. That's my motto. Have them snappy.

ANNIE. (*Giggling*) When Mr. Blake saw these skirts he said Main Street would look like an Italian carnival if everyone wore what you bought.

JAMES. I could stand it. (*Crossing to skirts on table*) Look at this stuff. (*He takes hold of a quiet checked skirt and is about to make a disparaging remark when the office door is opened and JOHN BLAKE enters.*)

(JOHN BLAKE is a slightly built, not very good looking man of about thirty. A type that would be called "odd." Rather slow in speech. Wears a suit a little too large for him, but is very neat

in his appearance. Extremely honest himself, he tells everyone the exact truth, and his specialty is giving advice. But this fault springs from a too kind heart, rather than from any desire to interfere. As JOHN enters, JAMES checks himself, and speaks again to ANNIE, rather sharply.)

JAMES. Go inside, please, and check those invoices.

ANNIE. *(Pertly again)* I thought you were in a hurry to have these tagged. I can't do but one thing at a time.

JAMES. *(Sternly)* Let that be what you're told.

ANNIE. *(Dropping tags on counter)* I'm a-doing it, ain't I? *(She crosses slowly toward office, passing JOHN at c.)*

JOHN. *(Pauses, and speaks cheerfully)* How do you like the new stock, Annie?

ANNIE. *(Speaking sweetly, with marked change in her voice)* Some of it's lovely, Mr. Blake. I'm crazy to have one of those small checked skirts.

JOHN. You and I have discriminating taste. *(In a half whisper, as if he was telling her a secret)* I let Mr. Harlow pick a few bright ones for his customers.

ANNIE. *(With a glance directed at JAMES)* It's a good thing for this town we don't all have the same taste. *(She crosses and exits into office R.2.)*

JOHN. *(Laughing)* Annie's a nice little girl.

JAMES. *(Emphatically)* She's a two-faced little monkey.

JOHN. She practices your maxim. Tell everyone what they want to hear.

JAMES. She needn't practice it on me. *(He crosses to R.)* If you'll finish this tagging, I'll check with Annie. If you're busy, call me. *(Exits into office R.2.)*

(JOHN crosses to table, starts to examine skirts, evidently very much pleased with them. He begins to whistle cheerily. In a moment the door c. opens and MINERVA TILLINGHAST enters.)

(MINERVA TILLINGHAST is a very stout lady, nearly as broad as she is long, evidently from the outlying country district. She is dressed in a very large black and white plaid skirt, with a short coat of a startling shade of blue. She has a very small hat perched on the top of her head. She is very decisive in her manner, aggressive, masterful. She bangs the door after her, and advances briskly. JOHN advances to meet her with his cheery smile and his hand outstretched.)

JOHN. Good morning, Mrs. Tillinghast.

MINERVA. Good morning, Mr. Blake. (*Taking his hand.*)

JOHN. You're in early. (*They come down to c.*)

MINERVA. Yes—got up at four o'clock to do my baking so I could drive in with Joshua. He's up street, buying some fodder for the horses.

JOHN. What can we do for you?

MINERVA. I dunno as you can do anything, but I'd like to look at some hats. I see some good-looking ones in the window.

JOHN. Our new stock. Came in yesterday.

MINERVA. (*Sitting down at table*) I don't care whether it's old or new. I know exactly what I want.

JOHN. If all our customers knew what they wanted, life would be a rosy dream.

MINERVA. I don't always—but when my mind's set, it's set.

JOHN. (*Goes back of counter and starts to pull out a box from underneath*) That's the idea, Mrs. Tillinghast. Make up your mind, and then be firm.

MINERVA. Guess anyone who knows me don't

have to tell me that. My mind's firm on having one of those large picture hats.

JOHN. (*Startled, drops box he is pulling out*)
Wha—what's that?

MINERVA. (*Emphatically*) I want one of those large picture hats. (*Quickly*) I know, maybe some folks may think I'm too old for one, but I've seen ever so many people wearing those big hats that was every bit as old as I am—and they looked just elegant in them.

JOHN. (*Looking askance at MINERVA; about to argue, then hesitates. Brings out a black hat from box with a straight, medium-sized brim*) We sell a great many hats about this size for—for middle-aged women. (*Holding up hat.*)

MINERVA. (*Glancing at hat, then waving it majestically one side*) Nothing like it. You must think I look old enough to be your mother.

JOHN. (*Quickly*) Oh, no, no, hardly that. (*Takes out a large dark blue hat with a soft brim*) Here's something positively girlish looking.

MINERVA. (*Looking at it, then waving it majestically one side*) That's cousin to the first one. Here, I'll look. (*Goes to him, pushing him one side*) If you have it, I'll find it myself. (*She pulls out one or two boxes, brings up a hat, exclaims triumphantly*) Here it is! Just what I want. (*She returns to table, carrying a large, floppy white hat, trimmed with a wreath of bright flowers, suitable for a young girl*) That is exactly what I want.

JOHN. (*Gasps*) Oh! Er—er—white hats are going to be very fashionable this season.

MINERVA. I don't care nothing about the fashion. I've worn small hats for twenty years, because the same hat was good for Sundays and week days, morning and evening. So practical. This time—I'm going to have what I want.

JOHN. Let me put it on.

MINERVA. I can put it on myself. You'll only muss my hair. (*Setting the hat up on top of her head*) Where's your glass?

JOHN. Right here. (*Handing her the hand glass tied to the side of the table. Speaking suggestively*) Those hats should be worn a little lower.

MINERVA. (*Ignoring him, surveying herself from side to side*) Precisely what I had in mind. (JOHN crosses to counter, looking for other hats.)

MINERVA. (*Turning from side to side*) No, I can't see that it's one bit too young looking. (*Turning suddenly to JOHN*) Do you think it is?

JOHN. (*Startled*) I—I—— (*He is about to say more, then checks himself, comes forward with two dark, slightly smaller hats*) You want to try on more than one hat, Mrs. Tillinghast.

MINERVA. (*Ignoring him, turning round and round before the mirror*) Do you think this hat is too young looking for me?

JOHN. (*Trying to dodge the question, holds up the blue hat*) Just try this one on.

MINERVA. (*Irritably*) John Blake, you're as bad as my husband. I've been married to him for thirty years, and I never yet knew him to give a direct answer. This is the third time I've asked you. Do you think this hat is too young looking for me?

JOHN. (*Driven to a corner, stammers*) Do—do you really want my opinion?

MINERVA. (*Snappily*) Do you think I'd ask for it if I didn't?

JOHN. Mrs. Tillinghast, since you insist, I *do* think it is a trifle—just a trifle too young looking.

MINERVA. (*Disgustedly*) I knew you'd say that.

JOHN. (*Staggered*) You insisted.

MINERVA. (*Unheeding him, rushes on*) Many a time I've said to Joshua, there's one person in this town you can always depend on to tell you the truth,

whether you want to hear it or not, and that's John Blake.

JOHN. Let me put the hat on further down.

MINERVA. What's the use? You've said enough to take all the pleasure out of it. (*Throwing the hat on table and speaking savagely*) Let me look at that blue thing.

JOHN. (*Seeing he has done the wrong thing and wanting to pacify her, takes up the white hat*) Mrs. Tillinghast, that wasn't a fair question. I never can tell how a hat will look unless I try it on a customer myself.

MINERVA. I know how it looks. You can put that blue one on if you like, but I'm not going to take it.

JOHN. (*Putting the hat on from the back, tilted in front, a stunning hat on her*) There, just look at that. (*Handing her the glass.*)

MINERVA. (*Taking the glass, looking from side to side*) Well, it may be the way I should wear it, but if the Lord didn't want me to use my eyes, why did he give them to me?

JOHN. I'll wager there won't be anything worth seeing that you'll miss.

MINERVA. Whose doing the seeing, me or you? (*Taking up the white hat, looks at it, sighs*) I do like this hat.

JOHN. (*Decidedly*) Then take it. Anyone with a firm mind like yours can only decide for themselves.

MINERVA. (*Throwing it down*) You've said enough to make me wobbly. (*With a sigh, hands the hat back to JOHN*) If I take the white one I'll wish I'd taken the blue one, and if I take the blue I'll wish I'd taken the white one. (*Taking the blue hat off*) I'll have to get Joshua to drive me over to Coulter's.

JOHN. (*Scenting danger*) Now, now, I won't let

you leave this store without putting on that white hat the way it should go. I insist.

MINERVA. Won't do no good. I never wear hats over my eyes.

JOHN. You let Annie put it on. (*As MINERVA tries to interrupt him, he crosses to office door R.2, talking all the time*) She'll know how to fix it for you. (*He opens the office door and calls*) Annie, Annie.

ANNIE. (*Entering R.2*) Yes, Mr. Blake.

(*JOHN carefully closes the office door after her, speaks very quickly without giving MINERVA a chance to speak, crosses with ANNIE to Left, grabs up white, blue and black hats, pushes both women up to fitting room as he talks.*)

JOHN. Mrs. Tillinghast wants to try on these hats. She isn't quite sure which she likes, but—(*Nudging ANNIE*)—the white hat is very becoming to her. And you know, Annie, a white hat can be worn by young and old. I—I mean anyone.

ANNIE. (*Giggling*) I had my eye on that hat myself.

JOHN. (*Checking her*) Women of eighty are wearing white hats this season. Whatever you do, don't try to influence Mrs. Tillinghast. Let her decide for herself.

MINERVA. It's too late to talk that way now. (*Turning at door*) I don't know why I asked your advice. You never agree with a person. (*She exits into the fitting room, banging the door after her.*)

ANNIE. (*Outside the door*) Do you really want me to sell her that white hat?

JOHN. If it's the last act of your life, sell her that hat.

ANNIE. (*Throwing up her hands*) I hate to do it. (*Putting the hat on her head, down low, turns*

to JOHN, *making a pretty picture*) I can see the way she'll wear it, perched on top of her head. (*Pushing hat up.*)

JOHN. If she wants to wear it perched on top of the top hairpin in her head—perch it there.

ANNIE. And tell her it makes her look ten years younger. I'm wise. (*She exits into fitting room.*)

(JOHN *gives a sigh of relief, crosses down, sits down in chair C. and wipes his brow, then with a laugh, rises, crosses to counter and begins to put the hats away, humming cheerfully.*)

JAMES. (*Enters from office R.2, looks inquiringly around, then crosses to C.*) Didn't I hear a customer?

JOHN. Yes.

JAMES. Who?

JOHN. Mrs. Tillinghast.

JAMES. What she want?

JOHN. (*Smiling reminiscently*) A large picture hat.

JAMES. (*Starting, looks at JOHN suspiciously*) What did you try to sell her?

JOHN. What she wanted—— (*Then his honesty asserts itself*) That is, she's trying on several.

JAMES. Several?

JOHN. Large and small.

JAMES. (*Throwing up his hands*) Wouldn't you know it?

JOHN. Jim, I showed her that white floppy hat. She insisted that I tell her if it was too young for her.

JAMES. And you did.

JOHN. (*Laughing reminiscently*) Wait till you see it on her.

JAMES. You should worry what she looks like, as long as she buys the hat.

JOHN. (*Brightening*) I fixed it.

JAMES. I can believe that.

JOHN. (*Insistently*) I told Annie to sell her the white hat, and nothing else. I put it strong.

JAMES. Of course you did, after the damage was done. When she comes out you keep in the background, and watch me make a sale.

(*The c. door opens, and JOSHUA TILLINGHAST enters. JOSHUA TILLINGHAST is a little, wizened up farmer of about fifty. JAMES advances to meet him with his most jovial smile, and holds out his hand to him, and the two men cross down to c.*)

JAMES. Well, well, Mr. Tillinghast, this is a pleasure. Are you looking for your wife?

JOSHUA. Not 'specially. Got through my business. Minerva said she was coming here, so thought I might as well wait here for her as anywhere else.

JAMES. A little better. (*Placing chair for him L.C.*) Make yourself comfortable.

JOSHUA. (*Sitting down*) Morning, John.

JOHN. Morning, Joshua. Your wife is preparing a surprise for you.

JAMES. (*Holding up his hand, warningly*) Don't spoil it.

JOSHUA. Trying to put something over on me, be ye? Hope you haven't been putting any high falutin' ideas into Minerva's head. She's enough there already.

JOHN. You know us. She's only trying on——

JAMES. Hush. Let the vision burst upon his startled sight.

(*The door of the fitting room opens and MRS. TILLINGHAST, the white hat perched on the top of her head, comes out, followed by*

ANNIE. *They cross down to C. JOSHUA turns and gets one look at MINERVA, then sinks back into his chair with a gasp.*)

JOSHUA. Jumping Jehosophat.

JOHN. (*Quickly*) I begged her to take a smaller one.

JAMES. (*Hastily*) John, I hear the telephone.

JOHN. I don't hear it.

JAMES. Oh, yes you do. (*He pushes him toward the office door. JOHN, protesting, enters the office R.2. JAMES crosses to MINERVA.*)

JAMES. Now, Mrs. Tillinghast, sit down here—(*Indicating dressing table*)—and let me get the effect.

MINERVA. (*Sitting down and turning slowly round*) I'm so glad you're here, Mr. Harlow.

JAMES. Just one minute. (*Takes hold of the hat to put it farther down on her head.*)

MINERVA. I won't wear it over my eyes.

JAMES. Oh, no, but just a little lower—(*Standing off*)—there. (*Handing her hand mirror*) Just look at that. (*MINERVA takes the mirror, and surveys herself from side to side. JAMES walks around her, then stands still*) I wouldn't have believed it.

MINERVA. (*Sharply*) What?

JAMES. (*Shaking his head with an air of conviction*) If I didn't see it myself, I wouldn't have believed that you could wear a large hat.

JOSHUA. (*Grimly*) Neither would I.

MINERVA. (*To JAMES*) Did you hear that? Isn't that just like a husband?

JOSHUA. No use getting het up about it, Minerva. Don't make no difference to me. As far as I can see, a hat's a hat.

JAMES. There's all the difference in the world.

JOSHUA. H'm. Got any hats that look like the other side?

JAMES. (*To MINERVA, quickly*) Don't you mind him. You look ten years younger in that hat. He's jealous. Afraid you'll run away with a younger man.

MINERVA. I don't know why there ain't more men in the world like you. (*With a withering look at JOSHUA*) Some folks are so careful the way they use a pleasant word, you'd think they cost them money.

JOSHUA. I calculate you aren't really hankering after my opinion.

JAMES. You know the one she really wants to please. (*To MINERVA*) Stand up, Mrs. Tillinghast. I always want to see the whole effect. (*MINERVA stands up, and crosses out front. JAMES walks around MINERVA, then stops, and speaks solicitously*) Do you know—it strikes me—yes, I'm sure of it—aren't you a little thinner than you were?

MINERVA. (*Delightedly*) Do you think so, Mr. Harlow?

JAMES. Just turn again.

MINERVA. (*Turning*) I did fancy I was losing a little.

JAMES. (*With an air of absolute conviction*) There's no doubt about it. (*Anxiously*) Mrs. Tillinghast, I hope you're not dieting.

MINERVA. Never. I don't believe in tempting the Lord by taking off what He's seen fit to put on.

JAMES. I'm glad to hear you say that. Better be a trifle too stout than take any chances with your health. (*Looking at her again*) You certainly are thinner.

JOSHUA. (*Grimly*) There's plenty left.

MINERVA. (*With asperity*) Don't forget, Joshua, there's them that likes them this way—(*Indicating height*)—and them that likes them this—(*Indicating breadth. For the past two or three minutes JOSHUA has been surreptitiously making eyes at ANNIE at counter. He now rises.*)

JOSHUA. You'd qualify for that—fine. (*He walks over to ANNIE and begins talking to her.*)

MINERVA. (*Turning indignantly to JAMES*) That's a sample of what I've been putting up with for thirty years.

JAMES. (*Patting her shoulder*) He's only teasing. You buy this hat. (*Facetiously*) You know the saying, Mrs. Tillinghast. There's a consolation in new clothes that religion can't give.

MINERVA. (*Startled*) Sounds sacrilegious to me.

JAMES. Isn't it true?

MINERVA. Maybe. It's a consolation I don't get none too often.

JAMES. Have it to-day. Wear this hat home.

MINERVA. I don't want to look foolish. Mr. Blake thinks it's too young for me.

JAMES. Ridiculous. You don't want to dress like an old lady.

MINERVA. I've often said to Joshua, the truth sounds so pleasant when Mr. Harlow tells it to you.

JAMES. If I didn't think that was a stunning hat, I'd say so.

MINERVA. What's the price?

JAMES. (*Looking at tag, turns it over*) H'm. (*Looks again, pretends surprise*) There's a mistake here.

MINERVA. (*Quickly*) What's that?

JAMES. (*Quickly*) Oh, don't worry. Mrs. Tillinghast, it's your gain.

MINERVA. (*Sharply*) What's wrong?

JAMES. (*As if coming back to earth*) There's been a mistake in marking. But you know—Blake & Harlow always stand by their prices. This hat should be eighteen dollars and seventy-five cents.

MINERVA. (*Startled*) Eighteen dollars and seventy-five cents!

JAMES. My dear Mrs. Tillinghast, this is a hand-

made hat. Those are imported flowers. Look at them. Friday is certainly your lucky day.

MINERVA. (*Still doubtfully*) What's it marked?

JAMES. Only fourteen seventy-five.

MINERVA. Fourteen seventy-five. (*Pause*) That's a little more than I was calculating to pay.

JAMES. Don't you realize, Mrs. Tillinghast, you're really saving four dollars?

MINERVA. I hadn't thought of it that way.

JAMES. I'm glad this happened to you. It isn't every customer I'd want to get such a bargain from us.

MINERVA. (*Decidedly*) I'll take it. (*Turning to JOSHUA*) Joshua. (*JOSHUA in the meantime has been talking to ANNIE. He is so absorbed that he does not hear MINERVA. Just as she speaks to him he touches ANNIE under the chin. ANNIE laughs. MINERVA turns in time to see the by-play, speaks again, sharply*) Joshua. (*JOSHUA and ANNIE jump apart. ANNIE crosses into office R.2. JOSHUA, startled, speaks gently for him.*)

JOSHUA. Yes, Minerva.

MINERVA. I've decided to take this hat.

JOSHUA. (*Recovering his self-possession, comes to C.*) I could have told you that half an hour ago.

JOHN. (*Entering from office R.2, crosses to the group*) I knew that 'phone wasn't ringing.

JAMES. Must have been an auto.

JOHN. (*Very genially, to MINERVA*) Well, Mrs. Tillinghast, is there anything I can do?

JAMES. (*Hastily*) No, there isn't.

JOSHUA. Nope. They two have fixed it up.

JAMES. (*Jocularly*) Here is where we need you.

JOSHUA. Time to pay for it, I suppose. What you charging?

JAMES. (*Quickly*) Only fourteen seventy-five.

JOSHUA. (*Gasping*) Fourteen—— (*To MINER-*

VA) Minerva Tillinghast, have you gone clean out of your mind?

JAMES. (*Taking the hat off MINERVA's head, and showing it to JOSHUA*) Feel of that straw, Mr. Tillinghast, the quality—

JOSHUA. (*Determinedly waving the hat one side*) Don't you suppose I can see? There ain't nothing to the hat but a little straw sewed together and a few flowers stuck around it.

MINERVA. Joshua Tillinghast, I'm going to have that hat.

JOSHUA. Fourteen dollars and seventy-five cents for that? No, siree.

MINERVA. (*Threateningly*) Joshua.

JOSHUA. I work too hard for my money to throw it away. I ain't got no way of stopping you taking it, but if you do, you can pay for it out of your egg money.

MINERVA. Egg money. (*Turning indignantly to JOHN and JAMES*) Listen to him. I paid for those hens in the first place. I've been saving the money for six months to make my sister a visit. Now he'd make me pay for the very clothes I go in. Did you ever hear such meanness?

JAMES. (*Conciliatingly*) There, there, Mrs. Tillinghast, I tell you what to do. You take the hat home. Cook him one of your famous dinners. After that, I know who'll pay for the hat.

JOSHUA. Young man, want to bet?

JAMES. I never bet on a sure thing.

JOSHUA. You come around after dinner and watch me coaxing to pay for it.

JAMES. (*Lightly*) You know, many a true word—

ANNIE. (*Opening office door R.2*) 'Phone for you, Mr. Harlow.

JAMES. One minute, Annie. (*To MINERVA*) Don't let him talk you out of your bargain.

MINERVA. (*Grimly*) Watch me. (*JAMES laughs,*

and exits into office R.2. ANNIE exits into fitting room.)

JOHN. (*Nervously*) You needn't pay for the hat to-day, Mrs. Tillinghast.

MINERVA. That ain't my way of doing business. He's a going to pay for this hat before I leave this store. My mind's set.

JOSHUA. So's mine.

MINERVA. Joshua, don't drive me too far.

JOSHUA. What do you keep hens for? You sell as many as six dozen eggs some weeks. You don't come to town more than once a week. Blessed if I can understand' what you do with your money.

MINERVA. That's no consarn of yours. For the last time, are you going to pay for this hat?

JOSHUA. (*Decidedly*) For the last time, I ain't.

MINERVA. (*Equally decidedly*) John Blake, I take you to witness, I warned him. Turn your head. (*JOHN turns, facing office. MINERVA turns toward the front of the store, reaches into her stocking, takes out the pocketbook, turns front, pocketbook in hand. Speaks to JOHN*) Here you be.

JOHN. (*Turning and crossing to her*) Mrs. Tillinghast, this is an outrage: Don't you pay for it.

JOSHUA. Young man, I'd know without telling—you ain't married.

MINERVA. (*Turning to JOHN. Counts out the money into his hand*) Fourteen dollars and seventy-five cents. There. (*She sits down in chair LC., folds her arms, and' speaks in a determined voice to JOSHUA*) Now, Joshua Tillinghast, you can go home—alone.

JOSHUA. (*Startled*) What—what be ye saying?

MINERVA. There's never been anything the matter with your hearing.

JOSHUA. (*In a slightly mollified voice*) Now, Minerva, there ain't no need of you a getting on a high horse.

MINERVA. I calculate it's my horse.

JOSHUA. There's times when you act foolish, and other times when you act just plain crazy.

MINERVA. I was a thinking something like that—
(Pause) Only I wasn't thinking it about myself.

JOSHUA. H'm. (Pause) How you figuring on getting home?

MINERVA. I saw Ned Davis in town this morning. I guess he won't have no objection to giving me a lift.

JOSHUA. Don't you forget you're my wife. I won't have you start any scandal in this town by riding home with Ned Davis. *(As MINERVA does not answer, but sits, staring straight ahead, JOSHUA is forced to go. He crosses to c. door, opens it, turns and looks at MINERVA again)* I'll be starting in half an hour. Reckon that will give you time to come to your senses. *(He exits c., banging the door after him, and can be seen wrathfully striding down the street to right. The moment he is gone, MINERVA, with a fighting note in her voice, turns to JOHN.)*

MINERVA. Now, John Blake, I want your advice.

JOHN. You poor woman, how can I help you?

MINERVA. Sit down.

JOHN. *(Takes c. chair, and draws it close to hers)* You can confide in me, Mrs. Tillinghast.

MINERVA. I know that. Many a time I've said to Joshua, there's one person in this town has a sympathetic nature, and his name is John Blake.

JOHN. I do sympathize with you, deeply.

MINERVA. I ain't a buying a hat now. This is a serious matter. I don't know another soul I'd ask this question. I want you to tell me what you honestly think.

JOHN. Depend on me, I will.

MINERVA. *(Explosively)* What would you do if you were married to Joshua Tillinghast?

JOHN. *(Startled)* I—I—really don't know.

MINERVA. (*Ruffled*) That's the first time I ever heard you admit it.

JOHN. (*Fumbling*) You know what I mean, Minerva. I—I—don't know—your husband very well.

MINERVA. You saw enough to-day. It's a sample of what I've been putting up with for the last thirty years.

JOHN. (*Deeply sympathetic*) I don't know how you've borne it.

MINERVA. (*Sighing*) Neither do I, when I think of the whole thirty years at one time.

JOHN. You deserve a martyr's crown.

MINERVA. (*Rises, walks up and down the floor, working herself up*) I've been a good wife to him. I've washed and ironed, and scrubbed and baked, and mended his clothes, for thirty years. (*Turning aggressively to JOHN*) I dare you, John Blake, to tell me there's a better kept house in this county than mine.

JOHN. (*Startled*) I'm not a presumptuous man.

MINERVA. (*More energetically*) Do you know what he'd have to pay a housekeeper to do his work for him?

JOHN. Really, I don't. I board.

MINERVA. Sixty dollars a month.

JOHN. And you have only your egg money. It's a crime.

MINERVA. (*Sitting down at table*) I've said many a time, if there was a prize offered in this town for meanness, there wouldn't be any contest. Joshua Tillinghast would be in a class by himself.

JOHN. (*Rises, and begins to walk up and down the floor*) Something has to be done.

MINERVA. (*Tartly*) Why do you suppose I'm telling you this?

JOHN. Your husband has to be taught a lesson.

MINERVA. I'm ready to give it to him.

JOHN. (*With a sudden inspiration, stops c.*) I have it.

MINERVA. What?

JOHN. (*Sitting down L.C., speaking decisively*) Go to your sister's.

MINERVA. (*Disappointed*) Mercy, I thought you were going to say something. I go pretty nearly every year. Joshua never yet sent me the money to come back. Though I have noticed—(*With grim humor*)—he was glad, usually, to see me, after he'd been eating his own cooking for a spell.

JOHN. Ah, Mrs. Tillinghast, you don't get my idea.

MINERVA. (*Impatiently*) I'm willing to, if you didn't take such a long time getting to it.

JOHN. (*Crossing to her, and speaking impressively*) I mean—go to your sister's—let your husband think—you aren't coming back.

MINERVA. (*Sinking plump down in her chair*) Leave Joshua—for good——

JOHN. (*Becoming interested in the idea, draws his chair close to hers*) Not exactly. New York is full of people who'll be glad to pay you sixty dollars a month to cook for them. Make Joshua understand, when he's ready to pay you that, you'll come back to him—and not one day before.

MINERVA. (*Shaking her head, dubiously*) Pay me sixty dollars a month. You don't know Joshua. He'd never send for me—never.

JOHN. (*Impatiently*) Of course, if you know all about something you've never tried—why ask me?

MINERVA. You do give the most startling advice.

JOHN. You asked for it.

MINERVA. I don't know why. You never say what I want to hear.

JOHN. (*Rises, walks up and down, speaks indignantly*) I thought for once you wanted me to tell you the truth.

MINERVA. Mr. Harlow makes it sound so good.

JOHN. Next time—you ask *him*. It makes no difference to me what you do. You can go on, getting a new hat once in two years, paying for it out of your egg money——

MINERVA. (*Interrupts, speaking decidedly*) I won't. Joshua Tillinghast is going to have the lesson of his life.

JOHN. (*Exultantly*) That's the spirit.

MINERVA. (*Sighing*) I hope I'm doing the right thing.

JOHN. Remember—the firm mind——

MINERVA. (*Rises, and starts toward c. door. Halfway up the aisle she stops, turns, and then comes down to JOHN. MINERVA speaks a little more softly*) I don't want you to think that Joshua's all bad. He's a dreadful kind man when anyone's sick. I never shall forget when I had rheumatic fever. I was in the east room, upstairs. Seems to me he went up and down those stairs a hundred times a day, and never grumbled once.

JOHN. (*Exasperated*) You want to make up your mind, one way or the other.

MINERVA. You ain't married. Stands to reason you can't understand. I was just a thinking—Joshua always does run down terribly when he cooks for himself. If he should get sick, I want your promise—you'll send for me.

JOHN. (*Taking her hands, speaking more softly*) I promise.

MINERVA. (*Turns, walks majestically to c. door, then turns*) There'll be a surprised man in this town to-morrow.

JOHN. (*Earnestly*) Don't weaken.

MINERVA. Weaken! (*She throws JOHN a withering glance, opens c. door, and exits L.*)

(*Mith a pleased smile on his face, JOHN crosses*

down to c., whistling cheerfully again. He crosses to L. and starts to put away the hats. JAMES enters from the office and looks around.)

JAMES. Have they gone?

JOHN. H'm, h'm.

JAMES. Who paid for the hat?

JOHN. She did.

JAMES. I'll bet she gets it out of him.

JOHN. (*Crossing to c.*) What do you think of the old miser?

JAMES. Never think about married people. It's bad business. They'll fight together like cats and dogs. Both ask your advice as if they wanted it. After you've given it, you watch them come together and turn on you.

JOHN. (*Stops whistling*) Is that so?

JAMES. Never knew it to fail. (*Suddenly suspicious*) You didn't interfere between them, did you?

JOHN. (*Evasively*) They've both gone home.

JAMES. Glad they have. I'll bet on her. (*Laughing reminiscently*) I did sell her the hat, John.

JOHN. (*Begins to whistle again, very slowly, registering that he is thinking of what JAMES has said. Stops whistling*) How do you know so much about married folks, Jim?

JAMES. Oh——

(He is interrupted by c. door being thrown open, and like a whirlwind WILLIAM PETTINGILL closes the door behind him and comes briskly down the aisle to c. WILLIAM PETTINGILL is a breezy, self-confident, self-possessed, nervy young man of about twenty-five. Very quick in speech and manner. ANNIE opens the door of the fitting room, and listens during the fol-

lowing scene. JOHN and JAMES turn, and cross to either side of WILLIAM.)

WILLIAM. Good morning, gentlemen. (*Shaking hands with both of them.*)

JOHN. Good morning, William.

JAMES. Good morning, Bill.

WILLIAM. (*Talking very fast*) I came early, boys, that I might catch you together before the rush of trade turns into your great emporium. Here you are, waiting to let me know your decision on the greatest land bargain ever offered. From two such keen business men there can be but one answer. I have come to tell you boys that I have reserved the choicest five hundred acres, the five hundred acres by the sea on which the new hotel is to stand—for my two best friends—John Blake and James Harlow.

JAMES. Easy, Bill, easy.

JOHN. I've been thinking your proposition over, Bill, and——

WILLIAM. (*Interrupting quickly*) Then the deal is closed.

JOHN. (*Slowly*) Not so fast, Bill. For the life of me, I can't see any hotel on that promontory. As far as we know, the land has been there for maybe thousands of years,—and never worth ten cents an acre.

WILLIAM. So was Wall Street—until a Vanderbilt had the vision. I want your names to echo through history as the Vanderbilts of Elmville.

JOHN. You always did have some visionary scheme in your head, Bill. If you'd spend half the time you put into trying to sell worthless land into some legitimate business, you'd be an ornament to the town.

WILLIAM. Legitimate business. (*Turning to JAMES*) I ask you, what business can be more legiti-

mate than causing homes to spring up where now is a barren wilderness. Than bringing to our town capital to build hotels—crowded in the summer by millionaires from all over our fair country. Think of the wealth that will flow into this town. (*Turning to JOHN*) I can see your store three times its present size, and still unable to accommodate the crowds that wait outside. No, no, it is you who are the man of small vision. (*Turning to JAMES*) You can see the hotel standing on our beautiful promontory.

JAMES. Sure I can, Bill.

WILLIAM. You will never say that my business is not legitimate.

JAMES. Never, Bill. That hotel will be the biggest thing that ever came into this town.

WILLIAM. (*To JOHN, triumphantly*) You hear him, John.

JOHN. (*Still doubtfully*) I hear him.

WILLIAM. Then, I ask you, are you going to allow your partner to make this fortune alone?

JOHN. H'm. (*To JAMES*) How much land are you going to take, Jim?

WILLIAM. (*Hastily, before JAMES can answer*) Five hundred acres at one hundred dollars an acre. Let me tell you, boys, I have steadfastly refused to put this land into the hands of the New York brokers. Why? I wanted my own fellow citizens to reap the benefit of the wealth that lay within their grasp. In six months—in six short months—you will be offered a price for the land of at least twice what you paid for it. Think of it. One hundred thousand dollars for an investment of fifty thousand. And that is not all. There are other promontories on Long Island.

JOHN. (*Interrupting*) Wait a minute—wait a minute. I want to know how much land Jim is going to take.

WILLIAM. Skeptic. (*Turning to JAMES*) Remove the last doubt from your partner's mind.

JAMES. Bill, if I had the money I'd buy the whole five hundred acres.

WILLIAM. (*To JOHN*) You hear.

JOHN. The same thing you hear. But I'm waiting to hear him say how much he is going to take.

WILLIAM. Man alive, surely you believe your partner means what he says.

JOHN. Always. (*To JAMES*) Jim—what do you mean?

JAMES. Just what I say. If I had the money I'd buy the whole promontory.

WILLIAM. Thank you.

JAMES. (*Warming up*) This town needs men like you. They ought to be encouraged.

WILLIAM. Thank you again. I'm willing to be called a visionary. Without the vision, where would the city be?

JAMES. (*Warming up*) There wouldn't be any city.

WILLIAM. I knew I could count on you—every time.

JAMES. You can. (*Sadly, seriously*) I can't tell you, Bill, how sorry I am I can't buy that land.

JOHN. (*Derisively*) Ha!

WILLIAM. (*Astounded*) Jim.

JAMES. It's the truth. If I knew anyone who would lend me twenty-five thousand dollars to put into land, I'd buy it.

WILLIAM. (*Excitedly*) You mean that?

JAMES. Never more serious in my life.

WILLIAM. (*Still unable to believe what he has heard*) Let me get it straight, Jim. If I can find someone to take your note for twenty-five thousand dollars, you'll buy half of that land?

JAMES. They have to know why I want the money.

WILLIAM. It's a bargain. (*Seizing JIM's hand*) I congratulate you. In congratulating you, I congratulate this town that it possesses at least one public-spirited citizen. But no—— (*Turning to JOHN*) I am forgetting. John Blake will never allow his partner to leave him behind in any plan that advances the social, intellectual——

JOHN. (*Holding up his hand*) Whoa. (*Laughing*) That's too speedy for me. I tell you what I'll do, Bill. If you find anyone to take Jim's note for half that land, I'll take the other half.

WILLIAM. (*Seizing JOHN's hand*) I congratulate you, too. In congratulating you, I congratulate this town——

JAMES. (*Interrupting*) Get busy, Bill. The offer is only open for a week.

WILLIAM. A week. In one hour I shall return.

JAMES. (*Laughing*) This town certainly needs men like you. (*Exits into office R.2.*)

WILLIAM. I knew Friday was my lucky day.

JOHN. (*Crossing to office door R.2*) Bill, when you come down to earth you're going to make a great advertising man. (*Exits into office R.2.*)

WILLIAM. (*Calling after him*) The new hotel will need me.

ANNIE. (*As soon as the office door is closed she comes out from her hiding place, comes part way down behind the skirts, and calls softly*) Oooh—oooh!

WILLIAM. (*Turns with a start, then crosses and takes ANNIE's hands*) Annie, did you hear what they said?

ANNIE. (*Dubiously*) Yes, I heard them.

WILLIAM. (*Exuberantly*) Could you believe your ears?

ANNIE. I didn't hear anything to get excited about.

WILLIAM. (*Sadly*) Annie, you're like everyone else in this town—no imagination, no vision.

ANNIE. I've been trying for two years to get that vision. The land isn't sold yet. My eyes won't stand the strain much longer.

WILLIAM. The land is all right. The trouble is with the people of this town. They can't see the most beautiful promontory on Long Island, with a gorgeous summer hotel crowning its farthest point—with the stately rows of elm trees lining both sides of the road—with vine-covered cottages nestling beneath——

ANNIE. (*Sitting down c.*) Honestly, Bill, do you see all that?

WILLIAM. Do I? I see the prettiest cottage of them all, overlooking the water, and just at sunset you come out on the piazza, and as you stand there, gazing out to sea, a man steals up behind you, just as I'm doing now—and takes your hand—just as I'm doing now—— (*Taking her hand.*)

ANNIE. (*Trying to get away*) Bill, you mustn't. Suppose a customer should come in. What would they think?

WILLIAM. They'd think I was the luckiest man in the world.

ANNIE. Besides, it isn't your hand—yet.

WILLIAM. You promised it to me—when I sold that land.

ANNIE. I can see myself, a grey-haired grandmother—no, I won't be a grandmother—I'll just be a grey-haired old maid, waiting—waiting——

WILLIAM. (*Dropping ANNIE'S hand*) I'm going to be a grey-haired grandfather. (*Pulling himself up with a start*) Gee, I'm losing time here. (*Turns to go.*)

ANNIE. (*Pouting*) Well, I like that.

WILLIAM. (*Turning back*) You know what I meant.

ANNIE. I know what you said.

WILLIAM. (*Coaxingly*) Kiss me. (*ANNIE shakes her head, "no."*) For luck? Friday's my lucky day. (*ANNIE shakes her head "no" again.*) Annie, don't you want me to sell that land?

ANNIE. Oh, Bill! (*Jumps up and goes into BILL'S arms. The c. door is quietly opened, and DOROTHY WEBB enters. The two jump apart.*)

(*DOROTHY WEBB is an exceedingly pretty girl of twenty, appealing, clinging type, but with a will of her own. Sweet, but not mushy. She wears a simple coat and hat, but is not countryfied. Prettily enough dressed to pass in the city without comment on her clothes. She comes down c.*)

DOROTHY. Oh, ho! I've caught you. That's how it is. (*ANNIE laughs, and goes into DOROTHY'S arms.*)

WILLIAM. That's how it's going to be. (*To ANNIE*) You may not believe it, but in one hour you're going to be an engaged girl.

ANNIE. (*Looking up, speaks doubtfully*) Ring and everything.

WILLIAM. You bet. Some ring. (*Crosses to back, turns at c. door, and speaks to DOROTHY*) Annie will tell you about it. Friday is my lucky day. (*Exits c. into street.*)

DOROTHY. (*Holding ANNIE at arms' length, much excited*) Annie, what does he mean? Are you engaged?

ANNIE. (*Positively*) No. Bill's had lots of wild visions the last two years, but the one he's having now is the wildest.

DOROTHY. He'll surprise you some day.

ANNIE. If he sells that land—he will. (*After a*

moment, laughingly) I suppose you want to see Mr. Harlow?

DOROTHY. (*Blushing and hesitating*) Eh? Isn't Mr. Harlow usually very busy in the morning? (*Both girls laugh.*)

ANNIE. I'll call both.

DOROTHY. Annie, that isn't fair.

ANNIE. They'd be out, anyway, when they knew you were here.

DOROTHY. (*Laughing*) Don't be silly. (*ANNIE exits into office R.2.*)

(*JOHN enters, holding out his hand to DOROTHY.*)

JOHN. (*Beaming on her*) Dorothy.

DOROTHY. Good morning, John.

JOHN. You came to see me?

DOROTHY. (*Taking his hand*) Well—I'm here. (*She drops his hand as JAMES enters from office R.2, also beaming. One hand is outstretched, the other holds his cap.*)

JAMES. Dorothy.

DOROTHY. Good morning, Mr. Harlow.

JAMES. You came to see me?

DOROTHY. (*Taking his hand*) Well—I'm here. (*She sits down C. JOHN stands on her L., JAMES on her R. They suddenly become very grave, and stand, glaring at one another. DOROTHY glances from one to the other, pretending great innocence.*)

DOROTHY. Mercy, how grave you are. I hope I haven't interrupted a sacred conference.

JAMES. (*Gallantly*) A happy interruption. You bring to our humble establishment the first bright moment of the day.

DOROTHY. (*Looking at her wrist watch*) That's an easy speech to make at ten o'clock in the morning.

JOHN. (*Sincerely*) Equally true at ten o'clock at night.

DOROTHY. Flatterers. (*Shaking a finger at each of them*) I shan't dare to tell you why I came in.

JAMES. Tell me.

JOHN. Tell me.

DOROTHY. (*Whispering to JAMES*) It's most important.

JAMES. I listen for your word.

DOROTHY. Be prepared. I want to see that green coat in the window.

JAMES. I knew it. When I put it there I said, that coat shall be the magnet to draw her to me. (*He crosses up to window R.C.*)

JOHN. (*Bluntly*) Dorothy, that coat isn't half as pretty as the one I showed you last week. (*He crosses L.U. and takes a blue coat from the rack. JAMES comes down R. carrying a green coat. JOHN returns L. with a blue coat. DOROTHY rises.*)

JAMES. (*Confidentially*) Let me tell you a secret. Green is going to be *the* color this season.

JOHN. This coat just matches your eyes.

DOROTHY. (*Looking from one to the other*) How perfectly ridiculous. I'll never be able to decide while both of you are here.

JAMES. (*Coaxingly*) Slip it on.

JOHN. You know this fits beautifully.

DOROTHY. Listen, I'll tell you what I'll do. (*To JAMES*) If it's pleasant to-morrow I'll come in while you're here. (*To JOHN*) If it rains, when you're here.

JAMES. New moon last night looked pretty dry to me.

JOHN. The moon I saw was straight up and down.

DOROTHY. Silly. There wasn't any moon last night. (*Awkward pause for a moment.*)

JOHN. (*Taking out his watch*) Didn't you have an appointment at the bank?

JAMES. You can go just as well.

JOHN. (*Decidedly*) Oh, no, I can't, I have a lot to do here. I haven't started that tagging yet.

JAMES. (*Reluctantly replacing coat in window, turns to DOROTHY*) Promise me you won't buy that blue coat while I'm gone?

DOROTHY. (*Laughing archly as she sits c.*) The weather report says—fair to-morrow.

JAMES. Rain or shine—I'll be here. (*With a vicious look at JOHN he exits c., banging the door after him.*)

JOHN. (*Laughing heartily*) Poor Jim, I expect I'm an awful worry to him. (*Sitting L. of DOROTHY after hanging up coat*) You did come to see me?

DOROTHY. Of course. That coat was only an excuse. (*Her manner suddenly changes. She has tears in her voice, but she tries to smile*) You'll think I never come to you, except when I'm in trouble.

JOHN. Dorothy! (*Drawing his chair nearer to hers, speaks very gently*) Who else would you go to?

DOROTHY. You always seem so much wiser—so much older than I am.

JOHN. (*Quickly*) Ten years isn't so much older.

DOROTHY. You forget—I was raised on the story of how you wheeled me around in my baby carriage.

JOHN. (*Quickly*) I could just reach the handle.

DOROTHY. Mother's told me often—how you pitched me out.

JOHN. You landed in my heart—every time.

DOROTHY. (*Laughing consciously*) Perhaps that's the reason I always think of you—when I'm in trouble.

JOHN. I think of you—always.

DOROTHY. John, be serious.

JOHN. I've said it so often, I suppose you're tired of hearing it.

DOROTHY. Please, not to-day. I didn't come to talk about myself. (*Rising and walking L.*) I'm so worried about my brother. I—I want your advice.

JOHN. (*Rising, and speaking with temper*) What's that brother of yours been doing now?

DOROTHY. If you feel like that about him, I can't tell you.

JOHN. (*Controlling himself*) Dorothy, any man would feel as I do. Percy is two years older than you. He should be worrying about you—not you about him.

DOROTHY. We were both so young when mother died. I tried to take her place. I wanted to have him love me. I'm afraid I only succeeded in spoiling him. Percy would do anything for father, but now he's gone—— (*She breaks down and cries.*)

JOHN. (*Putting his hand on her shoulder*) There, there, suppose you tell me the last particular trouble about Percy. (*With a twisted smile*) I'll try and be a father to him.

DOROTHY. (*Looking up and drying her eyes*) You're the best man in the world.

JOHN. (*Whimsically*) That puts me in the fifty class. (*Pause*) Send Percy to me. I'll have a talk with him.

DOROTHY. Oh, no, no. That would never do. My brother is so sensitive. You don't understand him.

JOHN. Dorothy, don't you think it's about time your brother and I did understand one another? (*With a whimsical smile*) You know, until you marry someone else, I shan't give up the hope of having him for a brother-in-law.

DOROTHY. Won't you be serious? We are such good friends now.

JOHN. Marriage doesn't always end friendship.

DOROTHY. (*Turning her head away, speaking very gently, but decidedly*) John, I'm afraid it will hurt you, but the only way I ever think of you is as a friend—the most loyal friend in the world—but only a friend.

JOHN. (*Sadly*) I know.

DOROTHY. I wish you would think of me that way. It would make it so much easier for me to ask your help.

JOHN. I won't forget again. (*Taking her hands and turning her towards him*) We are to be—just friends. (*Trying to speak lightly*) Now, what about Percy?

DOROTHY. (*Vehemently*) It's this little, dinky town. There's nothing for the boys to do nights.

JOHN. H'm, I see. (*Pause*) What *does* Percy do?

DOROTHY. You know what the boys do. They play pool, and—and——

JOHN. And cards?

DOROTHY. Yes.

JOHN. And gamble?

DOROTHY. (*Reluctantly*) Yes.

JOHN. And Percy loses?

DOROTHY. Sometimes, only a little. I settled everything for him yesterday. He felt so badly about it, it gave me the opening to talk to him.

JOHN. I see.

DOROTHY. (*Vehemently*) Percy isn't bad, he's only weak. He promised me he'd never gamble again. He's never yet broken his word to me. But there's nothing for him to do here. I want to get him out of this town.

JOHN. Oh, so Percy wants to get out of this town?

DOROTHY. (*Innocently*) Of course. He wants to go to New York.

JOHN. (*A little sarcastically*) The reform wave strikes New York.

DOROTHY. John, I think it's horrid of you to speak that way about my brother.

JOHN. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said it. Forgive me.

DOROTHY. (*Still indignant*) I think it's fine of Percy to want to go away from here, and start for himself.

JOHN. (*Quickly*) Can he? Has he any money?

DOROTHY. No. That's another thing has upset him lately. He'd always counted on having grandfather's money. You know, a little while before he died he quarrelled with my father. I don't want a cent of his old money, but I do think he might have left Percy something.

JOHN. Have you heard from the lawyer?

DOROTHY. Not yet. But grandfather died two weeks ago. If he had left us anything we would have heard before this.

JOHN. What does your brother propose doing?

DOROTHY. We have a little, and—— (*After a moment's hesitation*) Father left me our home.

JOHN. (*Startled*) Dorothy, you aren't thinking of selling your home, the house you were born in, that you love?

DOROTHY. I do love it. I'd hate to think of strangers being in it. But if you bought it,——

JOHN. I?

DOROTHY. I'd like to think of you being in the old home. (*Eagerly*) Then, don't you see, if it belonged to you, later, I could buy it back.

JOHN. Have you thought—your brother knows nothing about business—he may lose every cent.

DOROTHY. Don't you remember the tea room I had here last summer? I was making a big success of it when father was taken sick and I had to close it.

JOHN. You managed that—not Percy.

DOROTHY. Oh! (*Laughing*) Did you suppose I would let my brother go to New York—alone?

JOHN. This sounds like a scheme of Percy's.

DOROTHY. (*Indignantly*) It isn't his scheme, it's mine.

JOHN. (*Decidedly*) I don't approve of it. (*More decidedly*) I don't approve of it at all. Whoever thought of it, it's a crazy scheme for you to sell your home to open a wild tea room in New York.

DOROTHY. Who said anything about a wild tea room?

JOHN. I mean, wild New York. No, I mean, a wild scheme.

DOROTHY. (*A little angrily*) If you think it's such a wild scheme, don't buy my house. I don't want to think of you in it.

JOHN. (*Very gently*) I don't want to be in it, unless you're there.

DOROTHY. (*Indignantly*) I'm going to sell it. And when I am in New York, in my own darling little tea room, I hope I never see anyone from this little, dinky town again.

JOHN. You aren't fair. You asked my advice.

DOROTHY. (*More indignantly*) I don't know why. I never knew you to agree with anyone.

JOHN. You, too!

DOROTHY. (*Amazed*) Me, too?

JOHN. Dorothy, when you ask my advice, are you like all the rest? Do you just mean—you want me to agree with you?

DOROTHY. What did you suppose I meant?

JOHN. (*Irrelevantly*) That's what Jim says.

DOROTHY. (*Sharply*) I wish I'd gone to him. He would have thought it a wonderful scheme.

JOHN. Of course. That's his theory. That people ask your advice because they like to have someone agree with them.

DOROTHY. Let me tell you, he knows a lot more about human nature than you do.

JOHN. Possibly. (*Vehemently*) Nevertheless, I'll

never tell you to go to New York when I don't approve of it.

DOROTHY. Then I'm going without your approval. *(Crosses toward c. door.)*

JOHN. Don't go like this. Let me think it over. If I can see a way to agree with you, you know I'll help you.

DOROTHY. *(Up by door)* You won't agree. You never did. *(A little more softly)* Some people are willing to help—just because they're friends—

JOHN. *(Hurt)* Dorothy!

(On this strained situation JAMES opens c. door. He looks from one to the other, instantly taking in the tense feeling between them. He speaks lightly to DOROTHY.)

JAMES. You didn't buy it.

DOROTHY. No. I'm coming in to-morrow to ask your advice.

JAMES. Great. *(Holds c. door open for her as she exits. Crosses down to JOHN.)*

JOHN. *(Strongly)* Jim, I've a favor to ask of you.

JAMES. *(A little testily)* Well?

JOHN. When Dorothy comes in to-morrow I don't want you to advise her.

JAMES. *(Decidedly)* See here, John, I've tried to head this off for a long time, but it can't be done any longer. You and I have to come to an understanding.

JOHN. Understanding. About what?

JAMES. Everything.

JOHN. Phew! That's a large order.

JAMES. I mean it. Dorothy comes to you for advice—you quarrel. I met old Tillinghast down street. You interfered there. I wouldn't mind those things so much, but in addition to always being ready

with your advice, do you realize that you're the worst buyer on Long Island?

JOHN. Jim, it was you who urged me to do the buying this spring.

JAMES. (*Throwing up his hands*) Don't remind me of it.

JOHN. (*Persistently*) Don't you remember—you said I was the worst salesman on Long Island?

JAMES. (*Interrupting*) Something should have told me the worst salesman would be the worst buyer, too.

JOHN. (*Slightly roused*) Come, come, Jim——

JAMES. (*With determination*) Our ideas of running a business are as far apart as the two poles. We can't go on together any longer.

JOHN. (*Laughing nervously*) You will have your joke.

JAMES. (*Seriously*) I'm not joking. (*More kindly*) I realize this is a shock, but it's better for us to face the issue now while we can talk it over calmly. The constant irritation between us is getting on my nerves. I've stood it as long as I can.

JOHN. (*Sitting down in chair C., almost too stunned to speak*) I never dreamed you felt like this. We've had our differences, of course, but we've been partners for five years. Our credit is good. Our business has improved every year. (*Rising, looking round*) I've grown to love every inch of this store—— (*His voice breaks.*)

JAMES. I'm the one who's discontented. I'll go.

JOHN. That won't help now. The place will never be the same to me again. I can't understand why you suddenly feel this way.

JAMES. It isn't sudden. I've been holding it in. You must realize that until this spring I've done all the buying and nine-tenths of the selling.

JOHN. (*Trying to speak lightly*) Oh, come, Jim, I think there are a few customers who like me.

JAMES. Sure there are. I like you. Everyone in this town likes you. But this stock has shown me that you can't buy, and as for selling—you'd be all right there but you'll never get over your one big fault.

JOHN. (*Whimsically*) Only one?

JAMES. Only one—but it's ruining our business.

JOHN. Can I guess?

JAMES. Of course you can. I've told you a hundred times. You're too honest.

JOHN. (*Skeptically, as if such a thing was impossible*) Too honest?

JAMES. (*Decidedly*) Too honest.

JOHN. (*Helplessly*) Jim, what can I do? Everyone asks my advice.

JAMES. It doesn't follow that you have to give it.

JOHN. (*Shaking his head*) I wouldn't feel honest if I didn't.

JAMES. There you go. You'll never learn what a customer really means when he asks for your advice.

JOHN. He wants my honest opinion.

JAMES. Nothing of the sort. He asks your advice because he wants to be flattered.

JOHN. (*Astounded*) Flattered!

JAMES. Flattered. (*Spelling it out*) *Flattered*. Nothing flatters a person so much as to ask your advice—and then have you agree with them.

JOHN. (*Shaking his head*) Not always, Jim. When I ask advice, I want it.

JAMES. Some men do. Five out of ten. When a woman asks your advice she wants you to agree with her,—ten times out of ten. Don't forget—*we sell to women*.

JOHN. Oh, come, Jim, you don't practice what you preach.

JAMES. I don't, eh?

JOHN. No, you don't. What about Mrs. Perkins?

JAMES. (*Aggressively*) What about Mrs. Perkins?

JOHN. When she came in yesterday she asked for a red waist.

JAMES. Well?

JOHN. You sold her a blue one.

JAMES. (*Quickly*) We hadn't a red waist in her size. That's salesmanship.

JOHN. Was it honest?

JAMES. (*Despairingly*) I'll never be able to make you understand.

JOHN. I'm afraid not, Jim.

JAMES. (*Turning and looking at skirts*) Ugh! This place looks as cheerful as an undertaking establishment.

JOHN. I like quiet colors.

JAMES. You don't want to like them a season when everyone is wearing bright ones.

JOHN. To sum it up, Jim,—I'm all wrong, and then some.

JAMES. (*Picking tags off counter*) You can finish this tagging.

JOHN. (*Waving them one side*) No. If I'm only good to be a tagging machine, I'll quit. Go in and figure what it's worth to get rid of me.

JAMES. I knew you'd take it all right, John.

JOHN. (*Turning away, trying to hide his hurt under a smile*) Oh, yes, yes, I'm taking it all right. Always agree with a person. You see, I'm learning.

JAMES. (*Hesitates a moment, then crosses to office, turns at door*) I want to do what's fair.

JOHN. I'll agree. Go in and figure. (JAMES exits R.2 into office.)

(JOHN crosses L.U. to the skirts, looks at them lovingly, walks round for a moment, then sits down in chair C. and with a deep sigh buries his face in his hands. After a moment the C. door is

thrown open, and DOROTHY enters, followed by her brother PERCY. PERCY WEBB is a huskily built, broad-shouldered, good-looking chap of twenty-two. He has an open telegram in his hand, and shows by his manner that he is greatly excited. He closes the door after DOROTHY and both rush excitedly down to JOHN. PERCY R. DOROTHY L. JOHN rouses himself, rises, and looks from one to the other.)

DOROTHY. What do you think has happened?

(Before JOHN can answer, PERCY hands him the telegram.)

PERCY. Read that. *(JOHN takes the telegram.)*

DOROTHY. *(Softly)* I—I'm sorry I was cross. I do think you're a friend.

PERCY. Couldn't get here fast enough.

JOHN. *(Reads the telegram to himself, puts a hand on the shoulder of each of them)* You two blessed children.

DOROTHY. Isn't it wonderful? Just as I had made up my mind Grandfather had forgotten us completely.

PERCY. The old curmudgeon didn't hurt himself. Twenty thousand dollars to an orphan's home and five thousand to each of us. I've a good mind to break the will.

DOROTHY. No, you won't. He didn't have to leave us anything. It's a lot better than nothing.

PERCY. *(Relenting)* Guess you're right, Sis. Anyway, it will get us out of this dump town.

DOROTHY. I can have my tea room. Oh, it seems like a dream.

(JOHN has become rather sober looking during this dialogue.)

DOROTHY. (*Turning to JOHN*) You might seem a little more pleased about it.

JOHN. (*Rousing himself, trying to share their joy*) I am pleased—I'm positively delighted. When—when are you going away?

PERCY. (*Moving to her*) I wish you weren't so keen about that tea room.

DOROTHY. Percy Webb, what do you mean? Last night you told me it was the most wonderful scheme you'd ever heard.

PERCY. Last night any scheme sounded good that would get me out of this town. Yesterday isn't to-day.

DOROTHY. The idea is as good to-day.

PERCY. Honestly, Sis, can you see me in a tea room?

DOROTHY. You don't have to pour the tea.

PERCY. I should hope not.

DOROTHY. There's plenty of other things you could do.

PERCY. I hate tea rooms. I hate tea. I want to get out in the open, where I can look for miles and miles, and not see anyone.

DOROTHY. I'll never let you go away alone—never.

PERCY. Don't you understand, Sis, it isn't that I want to get away from you. But as long as I'm tied to your apron strings—I'll never amount to anything.

DOROTHY. I wish Grandfather had never left us his old money.

PERCY. (*Turning to JOHN*) Isn't a man's place out in the world?

JOHN. (*Hesitating*) Well, Percy——

DOROTHY. (*Interrupting eagerly*) That's right, ask him. He never agreed with anyone in his life.

JOHN. (*Turns quickly to PERCY, and holds out his hand*) Percy, I think you should go so far away you'll long for the society of a chipmunk.

DOROTHY. Oh!

PERCY. (*Taking JOHN's hand*) Thank you, Mr. Blake. We men must stick together.

DOROTHY. I think you're both crazy. Percy never had more than fifty dollars at one time in his life.

PERCY. Neither did you.

JOHN. He has it now.

DOROTHY. (*Gasping*) You don't mean you think my brother should have five thousand and be allowed to go to any old place—alone?

JOHN. Did you ever know me to give advice I didn't mean?

DOROTHY. No—o—o—

JOHN. (*Earnestly*) I think this is the crucial moment of your brother's life. This money, going away, the responsibility, will either make him or break him. If it breaks him, what of it—at twenty-two, with all the world before him? (*To PERCY*) The only advice I have to give you is this. Go so far away that, if you're broke, you can't get back.

PERCY. I will.

DOROTHY. (*Sitting at table, almost crying*) I never thought you'd go back on me—never.

JOHN. I couldn't agree with both of you.

DOROTHY. Then you should have agreed with *me*.

PERCY. (*With a sudden inspiration*) I have it. You shan't go to New York alone. Mr. Blake is wasting his life in this town. He'll open that tea room with you.

DOROTHY. (*Springing to her feet*) Have you gone crazy?

JOHN. (*Equally astonished*) Me?

PERCY. Mr. Blake, I can just see you in that tea room.

JOHN. (*Whimsically*) Hum! I know. Telling customers they want green tea when they ask for black.

PERCY. Nonsense. Everyone knows you're a great buyer, and a wonderful manager.

JOHN. (*Perking up*) Where did you hear that?

PERCY. Besides, my sister has to have someone look after her.

DOROTHY. (*Indignantly*) Any more than you?

PERCY. (*With a settled air*) Very well, then, have your own way about it. You stay here, I stay here, Mr. Blake stays here. You place your five thousand dollars in the bank at four per cent interest. I place my five thousand dollars in the bank at four per cent interest. Mr. Blake continues to sell coats and dresses—and we all grow beautifully old together.

DOROTHY. You know John couldn't go to New York.

JOHN. (*Quietly*) How do you know?

DOROTHY. (*Amazed, stammers*) Why——

JOHN. Suppose—I could——

DOROTHY. (*Reluctantly*) Of course, if Percy will go thousands of miles away.

PERCY. I'm going. That's settled.

JOHN. Would—would you like me for a business partner?

DOROTHY. Just business?

JOHN. Certainly—strictly business.

DOROTHY. (*A smile breaking over her face*) New York is a big place.

JOHN. Four people born there every minute.

DOROTHY. I don't understand. How——

JOHN. (*Taking an arm of each of them*) You leave that to your new partner. (*Leading them toward office door*) In there, both of you, and don't come out until I call you. (*He opens the office door* R.2.)

(JAMES steps out.)

PERCY. (*Exuberantly*) Mr. Harlow, Grand-

father's left each of us five thousand dollars. I'm going out West, and Dorothy——

JOHN. (*Pushing them into the office, and pulling JAMES away*) Percy, in the West they shoot men who tell all they know. (*He closes the office door R.2 quickly, and walks to L.*)

JAMES. (*Following him to c., laughing*) I guess it won't be long before that news is over this town. I certainly am glad for those two kids. (*JOHN walks up and down the floor as if he was very much upset.*)

JAMES. What's the matter with you?

JOHN. (*Stopping his walk*) I'm upset—terribly upset. (*With great seriousness*) Did you mean what you said this morning?

JAMES. I don't know. I've said a lot of things this morning.

JOHN. I mean—about our separating.

JAMES. (*In a contrite manner*) I've been worrying about that, too. I realize you aren't the best buyer——

JOHN. Worst on Long Island.

JAMES. Nor the best salesman.

JOHN. Worst on Long Island.

JAMES. Still, lots of customers like you. I know it's going to hurt you to leave this place.

JOHN. It can never be the same to me. If you want to go——

JAMES. (*Hastily*) No, no.

JOHN. Then I must. It can be at your figure, James.

JAMES. (*Perking up*) I hated to do it, John, but I have been figuring——

JOHN. (*Raising his hand*) How much is it worth?

JAMES. (*Hesitating*) You know business hasn't been good lately.

JOHN. What's the price?

JAMES. Well, I figured about twenty-five thousand dollars.

JOHN. Make it thirty-five thousand.

JAMES. I'd have to think that over.

JOHN. Thirty-five thousand. It's a cheap price to get rid of the worst salesman on Long Island.

JAMES. Of course, I'd like to part friends, without any hard feeling——

JOHN. We can, at thirty-five thousand.

JAMES. You'd have to take my notes.

JOHN. (*A little proudly*) Blake & Harlow's notes have always been good.

JAMES. (*Suspiciously*) You're not going to open another store here?

JOHN. Oh, no, no. I wouldn't think of doing anything like that.

JAMES. Do you know, John, I'm going to miss you terribly.

JOHN. (*Pushing him toward office door*) You go in and sign those notes.

JAMES. (*Moving toward door*) I mean it, John——

(*Office door R.2 is opened and ANNIE enters, closing the door after her. She is evidently in a state of great excitement.*)

JAMES. (*Turning to her*) Well, Annie?

ANNIE. (*Ignoring him, turns eagerly to JOHN*) Mr. Blake, will you—will you take me?

JOHN. Take you?

JAMES. Take you? Where?

ANNIE. To New York. Haven't you heard? Mr. Blake is going to New York to open a tea room with Dorothy.

JAMES. (*Astounded*) Well, I'll be——

JOHN. You drove me to it.

JAMES. I may as well take it gracefully. (*Holding out his hand*) Congratulations, old man. If people have money, what's the first thing they do?

Eat. If they have any left, they buy clothes, but first—they eat. John, I envy you.

ANNIE. Please, Mr. Blake, will you take me? We have it all planned. I'm to have the prettiest grey dress, and white apron, and cap——

JOHN. (*Putting his hand on her shoulder*) What will William say to me if I take you to New York?

(WILLIAM *throws open c. door.*)

ANNIE. I sha'n't ask him. If I wait for him to sell that land I'll never get married.

WILLIAM. (*Crosses down to c. on ANNIE'S words*) Young lady, that's where you guess again.

ANNIE. (*Turning, astonished*) Bill!

JOHN and JAMES. What?

WILLIAM. (*C. between JOHN and JAMES, holding out a hand to each*) Gentlemen, congratulations. This day will go down in the history of Elmville.

JAMES. I believe this town has gone crazy.

WILLIAM. No, Jim, they are only seeing the vision. The work was so easy I hate to think of the small part I played in it.

JOHN. Will you come down to earth long enough to let us know what you're talking about?

WILLIAM. (*Dramatically shaking their hands*) My two good friends, that five hundred acres is yours.

JAMES. Friday isn't my lucky day.

WILLIAM. With your encouraging words ringing in my ears I sought the president of your bank. Jim, I have a confession to make. I underestimated the value of your name in our community. I could have obtained one hundred thousand dollars for you as readily as twenty-five.

JAMES. (*Gasping*) Don't tell me—you didn't raise twenty-five thousand dollars on that land?

WILLIAM. Behold. (*Holding out one note*) All you have to do is to sign this note.

(JAMES *gingerly takes the note.*)

WILLIAM. (*To JOHN*) And all you have to do is to sign this note. (*Hands note to him.*)

(JOHN, *as bewildered as JAMES, gingerly takes the note.*)

WILLIAM. (*Starting glibly again*) And now, gentlemen, all I have to do is to go to New York, select the man whom I will allow to erect the hotel on our promontory, watch the cottages spring up——

JAMES. Easy, Bill, easy.

WILLIAM. With that note in your hand, don't tell me you haven't the vision?

JAMES. I've the vision, Bill. (*Pause*) But not the cash.

WILLIAM. Don't you know you will never need the cash. Before that note is due, that land will have been sold at twice—no, three times—its present value.

JAMES. (*Sadly*) Bill, why didn't you come ten minutes earlier?

WILLIAM. (*Puzzled*) You said your offer was good for a week.

JAMES. It's fate. Since you went I've bought this business from John. I'm signing so many notes I can't see over the top.

WILLIAM. Don't you understand, you will never have to meet this one.

JAMES. The president of the bank didn't know about this deal when he gave you that note. It wouldn't be right for me to sign it. I'd feel as if I was making money under false pretences. I'm so

disappointed. I can't talk about it. (*He backs off toward office.*)

WILLIAM. (*Following him, exclaiming*) But, Jim——

JAMES. Don't. I want to forget it. (*Exit R.2. He closes the office door on his words.*)

(WILLIAM turns to the others, staggered for a moment.)

ANNIE. (*Coming down c.*) He's the biggest fake I ever saw in my life.

JOHN. I don't get it myself.

ANNIE. (*Continuing indignantly*) He thinks he's so smart, selling people things they think look well on them. When they've worn them six times, they hate them. *He's* ruining this business, not you. (*She plumps herself down in chair c.*)

JOHN. Stop. I'd just decided you should tell people what they want to hear. Now you'll get me all mixed up again.

ANNIE. (*Beginning to cry*) We'll never get married now.

WILLIAM. (*Leaning over her*) It's worth the disappointment to know how you feel.

JOHN. Do you really want to marry him, Annie?

ANNIE. Do I? (*Realizing she is saying too much for WILLIAM*) I wouldn't wait forever for any man.

WILLIAM. You aren't going to. (*Turning to JOHN*) You said if I could get anyone to take Jim's note for twenty-five thousand you'd sign one, too.

JOHN. You haven't Jim's note.

WILLIAM. I did get someone to take it.

JOHN. It wouldn't do you any good for me to take half of that land.

WILLIAM. Not do any good? (*Beginning to walk excitedly up and down the floor*) John Blake, you

don't know the value of your name in this town——

ANNIE. (*Springing excitedly to her feet*) No, Mr. Blake, you don't.

WILLIAM. Let it once become known in this community that you have bought two hundred and fifty acres of that land——

JOHN. (*Raising his hand*) Help, help!

ANNIE. You aren't going back on your word.

JOHN. No, Annie, I'm not. (*Turning to BILL, chuckling*) I'll turn over one of Jim's notes to you. (*Laughing*) The joke would be on him if it should prove to be the lucky number——

WILLIAM. Lucky number. In six weeks I'll be——

JOHN. Go out and sell your other half.

WILLIAM. You didn't think I was going to sell this half.

JOHN. (*Laughing*) No, I didn't.

ANNIE. How can we ever thank you?

JOHN. (*Putting a hand on the shoulder of each*) By being happy.

ANNIE. (*In BILL's arms*) We'll be married on a Friday.

WILLIAM. (*Kissing her*) You bet. Annie, can't you see that cottage?

JOHN. (*Putting his hand again on BILL's shoulder*) Remember, it's fine to have a vision—when you don't let it become visionary.

WILLIAM. (*Thinking hard*) Maybe that's the matter with me. (*He kisses ANNIE again, crosses toward C. door, turns*) I can't help seeing those houses. (*Exits C.*)

ANNIE. (*Turning to JOHN*) Mr. Blake, you haven't said—may I go to New York?

JOHN. After what Bill's done to-day?

ANNIE. He's been two years selling this. Do you know anyone will take the rest?

JOHN. Not unless he has me taking them some day. I've an awful feeling that will happen.

ANNIE. Then I may go?

JOHN. (*Laughing*) You run in and tell my new partner I want to see her.

ANNIE. (*At office door*) I wonder which would be prettier—grey or violet? (*Exits R.2.*)

(JOHN stands, smiling. DOROTHY enters R.2, crosses to him.)

JOHN. (*Holding out his hands to her*) Little partner, is your head going around as fast as mine?

DOROTHY. Faster. I'm just beginning to realize the changes that are coming. It frightens me—a little.

JOHN. I'm too happy to be frightened.

DOROTHY. Do you know, Mr. Harlow doesn't want to sign those notes?

JOHN. (*Sarcastically*) Is that so?

DOROTHY. He feels so badly to have you leave him.

JOHN. I can't get Jim. I'd like to know whether he doesn't want me to go to New York—or wants me to think he doesn't want me to go.

DOROTHY. That's too deep for me. (*Shyly*) Doesn't it matter, a little, that I want you to go?

JOHN. (*Delightedly*) Do you mean that?

DOROTHY. I've dreamed of New York for years. Now it suddenly seems such a big place—with my brother away, too. I don't believe I'd have the courage to go if my best friend wasn't going to be there.

JOHN. Your best friend is going to be there.

DOROTHY. I can't believe it yet. You and I in business together. (*Laughing*) You should care what Mr. Harlow thinks.

JOHN. (*Delightedly*) Who ever heard of Jim Harlow? (*Both laugh.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

TIME: *July 1st.*

SCENE: JOHN and DOROTHY'S tea room in East 72d Street, New York.

A very beautifully furnished tea room in delicate grey and white.

Long French windows at the back look out on the street. As many windows as available. About a dozen small tables stand around the room. While it is desirable to have the number of tables indicated, just enough for the action will suffice.

R.U. door leads to waiting room.

L.U. door leads to kitchen.

On the right lower side, below door, stands cashier's desk. Below that are quantities of flowers. Have abundance of flowers around the room, which can be made to look very expensive.

Large calendar hangs on wall below desk.

When the curtain rises JOHN is standing behind the cashier's desk, looking rather gloomy. He is looking through a bunch of bills.

The door from the kitchen opens, and ANNIE enters, carrying a tray containing small vases filled with flowers. She is dressed in grey costume with white cap and apron, and looks extremely pretty. She crosses to the various

tables, placing a vase of flowers on each table. She places the last vase on the table nearest to JOHN.

As she does, JOHN lays the bills down, and sighs.

ANNIE, at table, hears the sigh, looks over to him, then she crosses to wall behind desk, and tears off a sheet of the calendar.

ANNIE. July first.

JOHN. (*Taking up bills*) I know that without a calendar.

ANNIE. The time certainly goes faster in New York than it did in Elmville.

JOHN. I guess it goes pretty fast anywhere when—— (*He checks himself, looks at the bills again, sighs*) You're waiting for these. (*ANNIE crosses to table back c., and begins arranging flowers in vases.*) Don't you think it's a little extravagant to put flowers on *every* table?

ANNIE. Dorothy says the flowers are the one thing that makes it possible for her to come here at all. She says as long as we are here—— (*She breaks off, after a moment, stops her work and turns to JOHN*) How long will we be here, Mr. Blake?

JOHN. As long as,—— (*Laughing grimly*) How many customers did we have yesterday?

ANNIE. Two.

JOHN. The day before?

ANNIE. Two.

JOHN. Day before that?

ANNIE. The same two.

JOHN. It beats me, how much food we have to buy, for two customers.

ANNIE. You ought to do the buying.

JOHN. (*Raising his hand*) Dorothy wants to learn.

ANNIE. I know. She insists you must be ready for the customers who don't come—but may.

JOHN. I wish food was like hats—you could always mark them down to cost—but food——

ANNIE. The children in this neighborhood will be sorry when this place closes.

JOHN. (*Coming around to her*) Don't say that, Annie, it sounds ominous. We can pay the bills this month. You know, you never can tell what will happen in a month. We might sell that land.

ANNIE. (*Dubiously*) Yes, we might.

JOHN. (*Crossing down to front, ANNIE following him*) Come, come, little sunshine, don't you go back on me. Why, if it hadn't been for you, I couldn't have stood—everything.

ANNIE. (*Brightening*) All right, I won't. We haven't said our slogan to-day. Now, one—two—three.

JOHN and ANNIE. We are going to sell that land.

ANNIE. Let's wish for a third customer.

JOHN. My faith has its limits.

ANNIE. There's no harm in saying it.

JOHN. Ready—start.

JOHN and ANNIE. We are going to have three customers to-day.

JOHN. I feel better already.

ANNIE. I'll tell the cook. (*She crosses L., then turns and laughs*) Won't Bill be surprised when he learns what a cook I'm making.

JOHN. If you ever want a reference you know where to send. (*He turns toward desk.*)

(*As ANNIE reaches door L.U., the door R.U. opens and JAMES HARLOW enters.*)

JOHN. (*In amazement*) James, it isn't you——

JAMES. Same old Jimmie—— (*Crossing down*

to JOHN, *and holding out his hand*) How are you?

JOHN. Fine.

JAMES. Came up to do some buying. Thought I'd run in to see how my old partner was getting along.

JOHN. That was good of you. Well—how does it strike you we're getting along?

JAMES. (*Looking around*) Pretty nifty place.

JOHN. Suit you better if it was done in black and yellow.

JAMES. Well, you know me. (*He sees ANNIE standing by door L.U.*) Annie. (*Crossing toward her with both hands held out. ANNIE crosses to him, very dignified, holds out one hand. JAMES takes it, holds it very firmly, tries to draw ANNIE toward him.*)

ANNIE. (*Drawing away, speaks with freezing dignity*) How do you do, Mr. Harlow?

JAMES. (*Laughing, bows deeply*) How do you do, Miss Lowell? (*To JOHN*) You certainly are slick. Never would have guessed you had it in you. Got any more like her?

JOHN. The others come in later.

JAMES. I'll be back. (*To ANNIE*) If Bill knew how pretty you looked, he'd never leave you alone in this town.

ANNIE. Oh, I don't know. I haven't found New York had any monopoly on fresh people.

JAMES. Ha, ha! Getting to be as smart as you are pretty.

JOHN. You'll stay to lunch?

JAMES. Will I? (*Looking at ANNIE, then speaks in a serious tone*) How do you find business?

JOHN. (*Looking across at ANNIE*) Growing slowly, but improving every day.

JAMES. That's the way to have it—slow but sure. Satisfied customers that come regularly.

JOHN. That's our motto. You'll see the same customers here every day.

JAMES. Do I have to reserve a table? When does the great rush begin?

ANNIE. Later. We advise everyone who can to come early. You—you get so much better service.

JAMES. As busy as that? I'm certainly glad to hear it. (*To JOHN*) I didn't know but Elmville might sound pretty good to you again.

ANNIE. (*Contemptuously*) Where's Elmville?

JOHN. (*A little eagerly*) Any of the customers ask after me?

JAMES. Do they? (*Earnestly*) To tell the truth, John, I didn't realize how much I'd miss you. If you weren't doing so well here—but I see there isn't any use talking about that now.

JOHN. Not the least bit in the world.

JAMES. That's great for you. May I phone?

JOHN. Of course. In the waiting room. (*Indicates R.U.*)

JAMES. (*To ANNIE*) Which is your table?

ANNIE. I—I—if you come early enough I'll wait on you anywhere.

JAMES. Just a couple of calls. Wouldn't miss giving this place the once over when it's full of pretty girls. (*He crosses and exits R.U.*)

(*The moment he is gone JOHN and ANNIE stand looking at one another in consternation.*)

JOHN. What are we going to do?

ANNIE. I don't know. I can't poison him.

JOHN. Not our third customer.

ANNIE. He? You don't suppose he'll pay for what he eats?

JOHN. Never mind, Annie, it means a tip.

ANNIE. (*Indignantly*) If he dares to tip me——

(She turns left. The honk of an automobile is heard outside.)

JOHN. *(Starts, then a smile spreads over his face)* That's Dorothy.

ANNIE. *(Viciously)* And Mr. Clinton.

JOHN. One of our steady customers, Annie.

ANNIE. I believe you're going blind.

JOHN. *(With meaning)* No, Annie, I'm not blind.

(The door R.U. opens, and DEWITT CLINTON enters, holding the door open behind him. DOROTHY'S voice can be heard outside, talking to JAMES. DEWITT CLINTON is a slightly built, boyish-looking chap of twenty-three. Slightly dissipated looking, dressed in the height of fashion, almost foppishly. He is very supercilious in his manner toward JOHN.)

DEWITT. *(At door)* Morning, everybody.

JOHN. Good morning.

ANNIE. *(Stiffly)* Good morning, Mr. Clinton.
(She crosses up, and exits L.U.)

(As she does so, DOROTHY enters R.U. She is dressed in simple but extremely pretty city clothes, and wears a beautiful bunch of orchids at her belt. DEWITT closes the door behind her.)

DOROTHY. *(Crossing down to c., speaks coaxingly to JOHN)* It was such a heavenly morning, DeWitt took me for a little ride in the Park. Am I terribly late?

JOHN. *(Humoring her)* Annie and I have managed to take care of the rush.

DEWITT. *(Crossing down to right of DOROTHY)* Who's the old codger who kissed you?

DOROTHY. Just someone from Elmville.

DEWITT. Wish I was from Elmville.

DOROTHY. Foolish. He's John's old partner.

JOHN. He's staying to lunch.

DOROTHY. (*Panic stricken*) Oh, John, what made you ask him?

JOHN. How could I help it?

DOROTHY. What can we do? I could never stand it to have him know how things are going. It would be the talk of Elmville to-morrow.

JOHN. They'll know, sooner or later.

DOROTHY. I won't have Mr. Harlow tell the story. (*Turning to DEWITT*) You'll have to take him to lunch somewhere else.

DEWITT. You'll go, too?

JOHN. We could never explain that.

DOROTHY. You leave the explaining to me. (*To DEWITT*) We'll go for a ride.

DEWITT. The car can break down.

DOROTHY. Don't suggest that. It does, often enough.

JOHN. I don't like the idea. Doesn't sound right to me—when an old friend comes to see you.

DOROTHY. (*Ignoring his remark*) I have it. We'll start in the car. I'll stop to phone. Come back with a long face. The cook has gone on a strike. We'll lunch at Shanley's.

DEWITT. Lunch is all right, if we can drop him afterward.

DOROTHY. (*Sweetly*) You'll do this for me?

DEWITT. (*Almost tenderly*) You know what I'd do for you. (*Glancing at JOHN*) But I would like to see you sometimes without another man around.

DOROTHY. You aren't any more anxious to get rid of Mr. Harlow than I am.

DEWITT. If you don't want him in here, we'd better hurry. He can't phone forever.

JOHN. I wish you could stay a minute, Dorothy.

(*With a glance at DEWITT*) I'd like to see you without always having another man around.

DEWITT. Oh!

DOROTHY. (*Quickly, to DEWITT*) Get Mr. Harlow out. Show him the car.

DEWITT. You're the only girl in New York I'd do this for.

DOROTHY. You're the only man I'd ask to do it.

DEWITT. (*Beaming*) You'll be down soon?

DOROTHY. In a minute. That's as long as Mr. Harlow is going to be out of my sight until he takes the afternoon train.

DEWITT. I hope it leaves early. (*Exits R.U.*)

DOROTHY. (*Turns to JOHN, speaks a little petulantly*) I'm ashamed of you, John, speaking like that to Mr. Clinton.

JOHN. Did it sound so much worse when I said it?

DOROTHY. (*Sitting down at table, left front*) Do you have to see me, just now?

JOHN. Yes. (*Pause*) We can fool other people about the business, Dorothy, but we can't fool ourselves any longer. It's the first of the month.

DOROTHY. Why will you spoil such a beautiful day by reminding me of it?

JOHN. (*Continuing doggedly*) You and I know the place is a failure. It would be criminal to put any more money into it.

DOROTHY. I don't care about the money. (*Rising, and speaking with tears in her voice*) It's—it's having my dream fail.

JOHN. (*Sadly*) I know what that means, too.

DOROTHY. (*Turning to JOHN, speaks more softly*) I know it's hard for you to see the business fail.

JOHN. (*Coming back with a start*) The business,—yes, yes,—of course, the business.

DOROTHY. (*Twisting her handkerchief nervously*) I hate to talk about money, John, but since we are

facing facts—— We each put five thousand dollars into the business. Was that all Mr. Harlow owed you?

JOHN. No—I put another twenty-five thousand into that land. The bank wouldn't discount the third note. It's due in October. I can't raise another cent until then.

DOROTHY. It isn't our tea room that's wrong, John, it's the location. If we were on Fifth Avenue, there's a fortune to be made there. DeWitt says—

JOHN. No more tea rooms for me. I can see only one way out.

DOROTHY. (*A little irritably*) Well?

JOHN. The first thing to do is to sell out here.

DOROTHY. Sell out. What?

JOHN. The good will—the fixings.

DOROTHY. (*Sarcastically*) The patronage?

JOHN. Em——

DOROTHY. I hope the rest of your idea is as good as that. (*Sits at L. front table.*)

JOHN. We can realize something. I'll go to work. You go back to Elmville.

DOROTHY. Never. I'll never go back to that town unless I can go back a success.

JOHN. Then stay here. I can earn enough for both.

DOROTHY. Let you support me?

JOHN. You know, I'd like to support you for life, Dorothy.

DOROTHY. That's against the contract, John.

JOHN. At least let me help you until your brother makes good.

DOROTHY. I haven't heard from him in two months. I won't lean on anyone. I don't want to hurt you, John, but you aren't suited to New York. Your credit is still good. When you get that money in October, start in business again, in a small town. That's where you belong.

JOHN. And leave you here?

DOROTHY. (*Decidedly*) I'm going to have my tea room on Fifth Avenue.

JOHN. How?

DOROTHY. (*Hesitating*) I—I don't know, exactly, but DeWitt is as sure I can make a success of it as I am.

JOHN. (*Slight bitterness*) You won't take my advice, but you will take his.

DOROTHY. (*Rising and speaking decidedly*) I know you don't like him, but have you ever thought what kind of a stupid life I would have led here if it hadn't been for him? He's been able now and then to take my mind away from the failure here.

JOHN. Dorothy, you know I don't begrudge you any pleasure. But do you suppose I can't see how you've changed? When we came here I was good enough for you. Now you're ashamed of me. Do you think I don't realize that that man is influencing you against me?

DOROTHY. You're jealous, John, jealous because he likes me, because he doesn't give me the same advice that you do. (*Bitterly*) Yours has turned out so wonderfully.

JOHN. (*With great dignity*) It is the last advice I shall ever give you, Dorothy.

DOROTHY. (*Crossing to him, penitent*) John, I'm sorry I said that. I don't know what's the matter with me to-day.

JOHN. (*Turning to her, and taking her hands*) It's all right, little girl. I don't need to be told that we aren't to go on together. But I'm responsible for your being here. I sha'n't go away until I know—just how you're going to have your tea room.

DOROTHY. Of course you'll know everything when I know myself.

JOHN. (*Trying to smile bravely*) When the time

comes that you go your way and I go mine—we'll part friends.

DOROTHY. What a foolish notion. Of course we'll always be—friends.

JOHN. Always, whenever you need me. (*Making an effort to speak brightly*) So that's settled. Now, remember, nothing but smiles for Jim.

DOROTHY. You can trust me there. (*She turns to R.U. door as it is opened and DEWITT enters. She speaks quickly*) Where's Mr. Harlow?

DEWITT. In the car. (*With a glance toward JOHN*) I thought perhaps I could see you alone for a moment.

JOHN. (*Crossing L.U. and speaking with mild sarcasm*) The pleasure is mine. (*He exits L.U. DOROTHY crosses and sits at table c.*)

DEWITT. (*Crossing down to c. and sitting opposite her*) What's the matter with him?

DOROTHY. I told him about wanting to open a tea room—alone.

DEWITT. Good for you. What did he say?

DOROTHY. Insists upon knowing how I'm going to do it.

DEWITT. The poor fish. What does he want you to do?

DOROTHY. Go back to Elmville.

DEWITT. If he's so fond of Elmville, let him go there himself.

DOROTHY. You can't understand how he feels. Here in the city a man can fail and his neighbors won't give it a thought. In the country it's different. Those who stay behind just wait to be able to say, "I told you so." I won't go back. I can't expect him to go.

DEWITT. You're different. You belong here.

DOROTHY. But I'm as much responsible for the failure as he is—I *would* buy. I was always afraid there wouldn't be enough.

DEWITT. You couldn't be expected to know. You want an experienced person for that. All you ought to do is to greet people with your pretty smile.

DOROTHY. What I ought to do is to swallow my foolish pride and go back to Elmville. John would go then.

DEWITT. You bet he would.

DOROTHY. He could open another store and no one would know he had failed. I owe it to him to make it easy for him.

DEWITT. Aren't you thinking a good deal about what you owe to him? I want you to think of yourself. Why can't you accept my offer?

DOROTHY. I could never explain to John.

DEWITT. Why should you explain to him?

DOROTHY. We've been here together. I've known him all my life.

DEWITT. Do you explain to everyone you've known all your life? Because you've made one foolish mistake, are you going on all your life—letting this man tell you what you shall or shall not do?

DOROTHY. John is different. He's an old friend.

DEWITT. Does friendship always go by age? Don't you think I'm your friend?

DOROTHY. Of course—but——

DEWITT. If he had the money you'd let him help you?

DOROTHY. Yes.

DEWITT. Then why not let me?

DOROTHY. I couldn't borrow money from you. What would your father think?

DEWITT. He doesn't have to know. I've some money my mother left me. Let me open that place on Fifth Avenue for you. If it's a success, you can pay me back. If—it isn't—well—it will be worth it to have you here in the city. I can't let you go back to Elmville.

DOROTHY. (*Fervently*) I don't want to go back.

DEWITT. (*Pleadingly*) Then why don't you say yes? Little girl, you know I care for you——

DOROTHY. (*Cautioning*) You promised——

DEWITT. You can't expect me to remember when I'm looking into your eyes.

DOROTHY. When you talk like that, I know I ought not to take the tea room.

DEWITT. Then I won't talk like that. But won't you let me prove I'm your friend?

DOROTHY. (*Nervously*) I don't know what to do. Let's get out. My head's in a whirl. (*Crossing up to door R.U.*)

DEWITT. (*Following her up*) When we come back I'll settle this once for all—I'm going to tell him what I think. (*Exits after DOROTHY R.U.*)

ANNIE. (*Enters L.U., looks around, crosses to door again, speaks to JOHN, inside room*) What have you done with our customers?

JOHN. (*Enters, crosses to c.*) Lost them. The number hasn't grown to three—it's shrunk to one.

ANNIE. The one that never tips. If that isn't my luck.

(*MINERVA enters R.U., closing door behind her. She walks very slowly, and speaks in a most forlorn voice, as she crosses to table c.*)

MINERVA. Good morning, John.

JOHN. (*Brightly*) Good morning, Minerva.

MINERVA. 'Morning, Annie.

ANNIE. Good morning, Mrs. Tillinghast.

MINERVA. (*Sits at table c.*) Just saw Dorothy whisking off with that young city chap. Expect the next thing we hear they'll have eloped together.

JOHN. Did you see who was with them?

MINERVA. No. Those cars built for two passengers, but with a girl slid between two men, don't look decent to me.

JOHN. That third person was an old friend of yours—— (*Pause*) Jim Harlow.

MINERVA. That's the best thing I've heard since I struck this town. (*Pauses, then as JOHN does not speak, she continues, somewhat irritably*) What's the news?

JOHN. I didn't have time to ask him.

MINERVA. I thought you said you'd seen him.

JOHN. Only for two minutes.

MINERVA. Two minutes. And you didn't find out whether old Joe Turner's still alive—or whether the Deacon's baby got over the measles—or if they've raised the money for the new church carpet—or——

JOHN. I didn't have time to ask a question.

MINERVA. (*Disgustedly*) If that ain't like a man.

JOHN. (*Consolingly*) He'll be back.

MINERVA. Soon?

JOHN. No-o—they've taken him for a ride.

MINERVA. I reckon they'll be back to eat. I'll wait for him.

JOHN. Oh—but——

ANNIE. (*Handing her the menu, waves to JOHN behind MINERVA's back to let her handle it*) What are you going to have to-day, Mrs. Tillinghast?

MINERVA. (*Looking earnestly at menu*) I don't know. I ain't no appetite these days. (*To JOHN*) Jim didn't say how anyone was?

JOHN. We didn't mention a person.

MINERVA. H'm. (*Looks at menu, speaks irritably to ANNIE*) Bring me some French toast and coffee, and a piece of apple pie.

ANNIE. The cherry pie is lovely to-day—fresh cherries.

MINERVA. (*Jumping at her*) I said apple.

ANNIE. Certainly, Mrs. Tillinghast. (*She crosses and exits L.U.*)

MINERVA. No wonder you don't build up business

here. That girl knows better what you want than you do yourself.

JOHN. She wants to please you.

MINERVA. So do lots of folks that make an awful mess of things. (*A little anxiously*) I don't suppose Jim has seen Joshua.

JOHN. We hadn't more than said "hello" when we were interrupted.

MINERVA. (*Testily*) You would be.

JOHN. (*Trying hard to keep his temper*) Heard of any work?

MINERVA. No, and I ain't expecting to. I haven't been three months in this town without discovering it ain't no place for stout people.

JOHN. I'm sure all the cooks I've known were stout.

MINERVA. I reckon, then, all the stout cooks are holding on to their jobs this season.

JOHN. There's a depression, Minerva. Wages have dropped a little.

MINERVA. You didn't tell me anything about a depression. I expected to find them at the train, waiting to grab me.

JOHN. (*Earnestly*) Why don't you go back? You've visited your sister before. Joshua doesn't have to know the truth.

MINERVA. Yes, he does. You took care of that. Set me on to telling him I wouldn't go back until he paid me sixty dollars a month. I can't go back home now if I wanted to—and it's all your fault. (*She starts to cry.*)

JOHN. (*Laying his hand on her shoulder*) I can't tell you how sorry I am.

MINERVA. (*Looking up and speaking savagely*) I'd never have left if I had known you were coming away. You promised me you'd stay and let me know if anything was wrong.

JOHN. (*Kindly*) Come, come. You're upset this morning.

MINERVA. (*Unheeding him, commences to cry again*) Joshua might be dying. I'd never know it.

(ANNIE enters L.U., carrying a tray with lunch on it.)

JOHN. You eat something. You'll feel lots better after that. Perhaps by to-morrow I'll think of a way out, have some different advice to give you.

MINERVA. (*Quickly*) No, you won't. I'll wait for Mr. Harlow. He was the one who always did give the nicest advice.

JOHN. Yes—what you want to hear. (*Pause*) If he can discover what that is.

MINERVA. He'll find some way out of it. (*With a sigh*) If I'd only asked him in the first place.

JOHN. (*Emphatically*) I wish you had.

MINERVA. Well, you needn't get nasty about it. The least you can do is not to take away what little appetite I have.

ANNIE. (*Placing the lunch on table, speaks conciliatingly*) I'm sure you'll like that toast. The cook tried a new recipe to-day.

MINERVA. About time. (ANNIE throws up her hands and crosses to a table at left. To JOHN) Three months since I left Joshua. You said he'd be after me in six weeks.

JOHN. If I'd known he was so stubborn, I'd never have advised you to come away.

MINERVA. I told you. No, you wouldn't listen to me.

JOHN. (*Exasperated*) I know. (*Sitting down at table right front as if he had heard the story fifty times before.*)

MINERVA. (*With asperity*) Oh, you do. That's all you have to say after you've separated me from my husband?

JOHN. Please. I've stood all I can to-day. (*ANNIE is busying herself at table L.U.*)

MINERVA. (*Glances at ANNIE, then speaks more softly*) I can see how things are going. If you want my advice——

JOHN. I don't.

MINERVA. You're going to hear it, whether you do or not. You go back to Elmville. You don't fit in here, any more than I do.

JOHN. You know if your husband came in here this minute, you wouldn't give in an inch.

MINERVA. Of course not. He'd be coming after me then, and I'd know the end was in sight. (*Looking nervously around*) I wish you wouldn't say such things. Gives me the creeps. Makes me feel as if Joshua might be here. (*She turns to the front again, and begins to eat her lunch.*)

(*The door R.U. is softly opened, and JOSHUA enters.*)

JOHN. (*Turns, sees him, gasps*) Joshua!

MINERVA. (*Jumping*) Don't say that. (*She turns and sees JOSHUA coming down to c.*) Land of Goshen!

JOHN. (*Advancing to meet JOSHUA with his hand outstretched*) Welcome.

JOSHUA. (*Ignoring JOHN's hand*) Don't know as there's any call for you and me to shake hands. I haven't called you a friend for some time.

JOHN. Nonsense, I don't feel that way about you.

JOSHUA. Well, I do about you, and I'm the one that comes out and says what I think. (*To MINERVA*) Morning, Minerva.

MINERVA. (*Effusively, half rises, starts to hold out both hands, then stiffens up, turns again, and says, very stiffly*) Good morning, Joshua.

ANNIE. (*Crosses down to c. with her hands held out in greeting*) Why, Mr. Tillinghast!

JOSHUA. (*Beaming, delightedly*) Little Annie! (*He takes her hands, and smiles delightedly at her*)
Prettier than ever.

MINERVA. A—hem.

ANNIE. It's my dress. (*Turning around*) Isn't it darling?

JOSHUA. Great. I haven't seen anything to compare with you in this town.

MINERVA. (*Severely*) Annie, I'd like another glass of water.

ANNIE. Certainly, Mrs. Tillinghast. (*Takes her glass, turns to JOSHUA*) You'll stay to lunch?

JOSHUA. You wait on me?

ANNIE. (*Handing him the menu*) You don't suppose I'd let anyone else do it?

JOSHUA. (*Waving the menu one side, points to MINERVA'S lunch*) That looks pretty good to me.

ANNIE. It is—only you ought to taste our cherry pie.

MINERVA. (*Hastily eating a piece of apple pie*) This apple pie is delicious.

JOSHUA. I'll take both.

ANNIE. Big pieces?

JOSHUA. Big as you have them. (*ANNIE laughs, and exits L.U. JOHN crosses up to desk.*)

JOSHUA. (*By MINERVA'S table*) Shall I sit here?

MINERVA. Land sakes, I hope you aren't ashamed to sit with your own wife?

JOSHUA. (*Sitting down opposite MINERVA*) Didn't know as you considered yourself that any longer. It's been three months since you left me.

MINERVA. I reckon I'm about ready to return.

JOSHUA. (*Eagerly*) Do you mean that?

MINERVA. On the same terms as when I came away.

JOSHUA. (*Settling back again*) Oh!

MINERVA. Seems to me you ain't looking very well.

JOSHUA. Feeling frisky as a two year old.

MINERVA. Your color don't look good to me.

JOSHUA. Well—I was thinking the same about you.

MINERVA. Never felt better in my life.

JOSHUA. How's your sister?

MINERVA. First rate.

JOSHUA. And the children?

MINERVA. They're all right. No manners. If they was mine I'd teach them a few things.

JOSHUA. You're too old to have children around you. You ain't been used to it.

MINERVA. (*Abruptly*) How's the hens laying?

JOSHUA. Great. I've saved every cent of the egg money.

MINERVA. (*Eagerly*) Did you bring it?

JOSHUA. No—I'm putting it away—against when you come back.

MINERVA. I might have known there was a string attached to it.

JOSHUA. Minerva, ain't you been keeping up this nonsense about long enough?

MINERVA. You know me, Joshua. When my mind's set, it's set.

JOSHUA. I didn't know but you might be ready to unset it—a little.

MINERVA. How much?

JOSHUA. Come back with me, and we'll talk it over.

MINERVA. The talking will be done here.

ANNIE. (*Enters L.U. with tray, and crosses to c. table*) This toast is piping hot, Mr. Tillinghast. I made it myself.

MINERVA. H'm. I hope you brought your indigestion tablets along, Joshua.

ANNIE. (*Slightly indignant*) I've cooked it every day for the past three months.

MINERVA. Now I understand what's wrong with this place.

ANNIE. (*Hotly*) There's nothing wrong with it.

JOSHUA. (*Who has been vigorously attacking the toast, now looks up*) What's that? Ain't John making a success of it here?

MINERVA. Does it look like it?

ANNIE. It's early.

JOSHUA. I've heard they kept awful late hours in the city.

MINERVA. Early or late, this place is as full as you'll ever see it.

JOSHUA. Guess our friend ain't quite as smart as he thought he was.

MINERVA. I'm sorry for him. As for Dorothy, she's lost her head over one of those dude city chaps.

JOSHUA. (*Leaning eagerly forward*) You don't tell!

MINERVA. All young girls are alike these days. (*With a glance at ANNIE*) Their heads are turned as easily as a weather vane in a March wind.

ANNIE. (*Indignantly*) Is that so? Well, let me tell you something, Mrs. Tillinghast. My head will never be turned by anyone that's old enough to be my grandfather. (*Looking at JOSHUA.*)

JOHN. (*From the desk*) Annie. (*He crosses down to c. table.*)

JOSHUA. Let me tell you something, young lady. I ain't but five years older than your father, and there ain't no way of figuring that—that would make me your grandfather.

JOHN. I'm sure I smell something burning, Annie.

ANNIE. (*Undauntedly*) If I was so afraid of losing a man I wouldn't leave him alone for three months. (*Still muttering, she crosses, and exits L.U.*)

JOHN. I'm sorry this happened.

JOSHUA. No more than I might have expected in

your place. (*To MINERVA*) Been coming here every day?

MINERVA. Yes, but it's my last day. (*JOHN throws up his hands as if to say "Thank Heaven" and crosses behind desk.*)

JOSHUA. Don't know how you've stood it for three months. (*Eating toast.*)

MINERVA. How's the toast?

JOSHUA. Not much. (*Pushing the empty plate away, turning to the pie.*)

MINERVA. Been doing your own cooking?

JOSHUA. Yep. Been eating most of my dinners down in the village lately.

MINERVA. That restaurant food. No wonder you look pasty.

JOSHUA. Wal, I'll admit the flapjacks don't taste much like yours.

MINERVA. Do you miss them on Sunday morning?

JOSHUA. Do I? (*Leaning forward*) Do you remember the Sunday I ate twenty?

MINERVA. Thirty.

JOSHUA. I don't remember but twenty—but if I had them now I guess I wouldn't have no trouble with the thirty.

MINERVA. (*With an inspiration*) Do you think they'd taste good now?

JOSHUA. Would they?

MINERVA. (*Rising*) I'll cook you some.

JOSHUA. (*Pushing back his chair*) You can't here?

MINERVA. You go out there—— (*Pointing to door R.U.*) —and read the paper until I call for you.

JOSHUA. (*Rising, speaks tremblingly*) Annie's in the kitchen.

MINERVA. I hope you don't think I'm afraid of Annie? (*She walks majestically to L.U. door, turns*)

If they'd hired me to cook for them in the first place, they might have had a few more customers by this time.

JOSHUA. I reckon there ain't no two opinions about that. (*MINERVA exits L.U.*)

JOHN. (*Crosses down to c.*) Mr. Tillinghast, you don't know how much I want to see Minerva and you go home together.

JOSHUA. (*Half playfully*) Keep out of this. Ain't I got her a cooking for me? (*With a chuckle he crosses up to door R.U., chuckles again*) If you want advice—I think the kitchen would be safer with you in it.

JOHN. (*Laughing*) I'm sure of it. (*He crosses and exits L.U.*)

(*JOSHUA opens door R.U. As he is about to exit he bumps into EDWARD CLINTON, who is just entering. EDWARD CLINTON is a heavy-set, rather good-looking man of about fifty, the type of man who has made his own way in life, and is willing everyone shall know it. He tries to cover his lack of education by a rather half fellow manner, but he has a very human streak underneath.*)

JOSHUA. (*Turning angrily around*) Pity you couldn't look where you're going.

CLINTON. (*Laughing good-naturedly*) And pity you couldn't go where you look.

JOSHUA. H'm! (*He exits R.U., banging the door. CLINTON crosses down to c.*)

ANNIE. (*Enters as she hears the door close, crosses down to table R.C.*) This table is the pleasantest.

CLINTON. Thank you. (*Looking closely at ANNIE*) What's your name?

ANNIE. Annie Lowell.

CLINTON. Belong around here?

ANNIE. No—that is—I've been here three months.

CLINTON. Thought so. (*Pinching her cheek*) That color's too natural for New York.

ANNIE. I'm from Elmville. (*Pause, as if doubtful if he will know where Elmville is*) It's on Long Island.

CLINTON. (*Surprised*) Elmville . . . Is that so? (*Sits at table R.C. ANNIE hands him the menu.*)

CLINTON. (*Waving it one side*) Thanks. I never eat lunch.

ANNIE. (*Resignedly*) Wouldn't you know it?

CLINTON. I suppose people who never eat lunch aren't over popular here?

ANNIE. How would you feel about it if this was your place?

CLINTON. The same way you do. If it will make you happy, I'll have a cup of coffee and a piece of pie.

ANNIE. The cherry pie is wonderful.

CLINTON. Cherry pie it shall be. But I'm to meet a man here. Just waiting till he comes.

ANNIE. (*Startled*) Here?

CLINTON. Positive. Blake & Webb's tea room on East 72nd Street. I'll admit the address sounded queer to me.

ANNIE. This is the place. Mr. Blake chose this neighborhood because it's so exclusive.

CLINTON. (*Looking around the empty room*) I should judge as much.

ANNIE. Perhaps your friend eats lunch.

CLINTON. (*Laughing*) I shouldn't be surprised. He needs to—to generate the steam he uses.

ANNIE. Steam?

CLINTON. Energy. That chap can talk faster than anyone I've ever heard—and I've heard some fast talkers.

ANNIE. What did you say his name was?

CLINTON. I didn't say. I'll tell you a secret, though. He comes from Elmville.

ANNIE. I knew it—Bill.

CLINTON. Being short, presumably, for William.

ANNIE. (*Thinking hard*) He's meeting you here? Oh, you are going to buy that land?

CLINTON. That land? Isn't there but one piece of land for sale in Elmville?

ANNIE. (*Talking almost as fast as BILL does*) Only one place worth buying—the promontory by the sea—with the summer hotel crowning its farthestmost point—the walks shaded by rows of elm trees——

CLINTON. (*Throwing up both hands*) That's the place!

ANNIE. (*Excitedly*) You're going to buy it. Oh! Let me tell Mr. Blake.

CLINTON. Blake? That's the man I'm to meet.

ANNIE. He owns half of it—and he's lost all the money he put in here—and all the rest of his money is in that land—and if he doesn't sell it he won't have any money anywhere——

CLINTON. I see. So he's willing to let it go cheap.

ANNIE. (*Realizing she has said too much*) Oh!

CLINTON. (*Patting her hand*) Never mind, little girl. When I see the place I mayn't want it at any price.

ANNIE. (*Almost crying*) Now I've spoilt everything.

CLINTON. Nothing of the sort. (*Holding her hand*) When I go to see it, the prettiest little girl on Long Island shall show it to me.

ANNIE. You won't let what I've said make any difference?

CLINTON. Every minute you talk to me the price goes up. (*ANNIE bends eagerly over the table, about to speak again, when R.U. street door is thrown open.*)

(WILLIAM bursts like a cyclone into the room. ANNIE jumps back, but not before WILLIAM has seen CLINTON holding her hands. CLINTON rises, and takes out his watch. WILLIAM crosses down to c., pausing for a moment, and looking a trifle beligerently from one to the other.)

CLINTON. (*To cover the situation, he speaks a trifle sternly*) I've been waiting three minutes.

WILLIAM. (*With slight sarcasm*) Haven't been lonesome?

ANNIE. Is that all you have to say?

WILLIAM. (*Hesitates for a moment, then holds out his arms to her*) Annie. (*ANNIE goes into WILLIAM's arms.*)

CLINTON. (*Laughing*) If that's the custom of Elmville, lead me to it. (*ANNIE and WILLIAM start apart, looking a trifle confused.*)

ANNIE. (*Quickly*) You'll have lunch, Bill?

WILLIAM. Thanks. New habit I've formed. I don't eat lunch.

CLINTON. Then I'll cut out my order. (*Looking at his watch again*) I can give you and your friend Blake about five minutes.

ANNIE. I'll call him.

WILLIAM. (*Raising his hand*) One minute. (*To CLINTON*) On my way here I had an illuminating thought. It isn't necessary that Mr. Blake should know anything about this deal until it is ready to be consummated.

CLINTON. Do you mean that you've brought me to this outlandish part of the town to meet a man—and now I'm not to meet him?

ANNIE. Oh, it would be lovely to surprise him.

CLINTON. It doesn't sound businesslike to me—but since you ask me—I'll do it.

ANNIE. When are you going to Elmville?

WILLIAM. (*Taking out his watch*) In two hours.

(To CLINTON) That train arrives at our village in time for you to see the setting sun sink behind the ocean.

CLINTON. Stay over night in that burg? Never. We'll go down to-morrow. I want to meet a train coming back the same day.

WILLIAM. At eight-twenty. But when you have once seen our beautiful village street, with the branches of the elm trees meeting overhead——

CLINTON. I knew it was time for those elm trees. At eight-twenty, then. (To ANNIE) When you're in your own little cottage, facing the sea—with the vines climbing over the front door—are you going to have a chair for me?

ANNIE. Would you come?

CLINTON. On one condition. Don't you dare to show me an elm tree. (*He crosses up right.*)

WILLIAM. (*Crossing after him*) The view from that promontory——

CLINTON. (*At R.U. door*) I'll meet you at the eight-twenty. And don't be three minutes late. (*Waves his hand to ANNIE, exits R.U.*)

ANNIE. Isn't he wonderful?

WILLIAM. (*Crossing down to her*) You needn't get so enthusiastic about him.

ANNIE. Silly! Don't you see I'm only jollying him?

WILLIAM. It's time you came back to Elmville.

ANNIE. You'll never sell the land by pulling a long face. Besides, if he buys it, he'll be our neighbor.

WILLIAM. It's bad business, to start by being too neighborly.

ANNIE. Can't you see I want to help you.

WILLIAM. (*Sighing*) I wish you weren't so pretty.

ANNIE. I've been here three months. No one has

run away with me yet. (*Archly*) Of course, I have met a few people——

WILLIAM. That's what's worrying me.

ANNIE. (*Suddenly, very sweetly*) Bill, you don't want that cottage underneath the vines any more than I do.

WILLIAM. (*Taking her in his arms*) Darling!

ANNIE. (*Looking up at him*) Are you sorry I'm pretty?

WILLIAM. (*Looking adoringly down at her*) I wouldn't have an eyelash changed.

ANNIE. Silly! (*They kiss.*)

ANNIE. (*Very businesslike*) Do you suppose he'll pay cash?

WILLIAM. Of course, I've looked him up. He's worth a million.

ANNIE. You mustn't seem too eager, Bill.

WILLIAM. You leave it to me. I've got him excited over that land just telling him about it. Do you think he'd go down if he wasn't interested?

ANNIE. Bill, I'm so frightened I'm trembling.

WILLIAM. Wait until he sees the most beautiful promontory on Long Island, stretching its arms into the sea——

ANNIE. He knows all about that sea. You catch that eight-twenty to-morrow morning, if you have to sleep in the station.

WILLIAM. I'll buy an alarm clock.

ANNIE. (*Coyly*) I expect if I was asked—I could get an afternoon off.

WILLIAM. When's the rush over?

ANNIE. This is all the rush we ever have.

WILLIAM. What?

ANNIE. Wait outside. I'll tell you everything.

WILLIAM. I'd like to see John.

ANNIE. Not a word until we're sure. Hurry, or he'll hear you.

WILLIAM. How long will you be?

ANNIE. Not five minutes. (*Kisses him, closes door on him as he exits R.U.*)

JOHN. (*Entering L.U.*) I thought I heard our third customer.

ANNIE. Only someone looking for someone—who doesn't eat lunch.

JOHN. Do you suppose that's what's the matter with this town?

ANNIE. What?

JOHN. The lunchless habit. (*Crossing to c.*)

ANNIE. It certainly looks it. (*Pause*) Do you mind if I take the afternoon off?

JOHN. Run along. Don't forget to come back for the tea crowd.

ANNIE. I'm going to let you handle them to-day.

JOHN. I'll try to manage it. (*ANNIE exits R.U., as DOROTHY and JAMES enter R.U.*)

DOROTHY. (*Crossing down to c.*) That car! We got as far as the corner, and there we've been sitting.

JOHN. I guess you found plenty to say.

JAMES. (*Crossing down to JOHN*) The only thing I wanted to hear—was how you were getting along.

JOHN. We're all right. Aren't we,—Dorothy?

DOROTHY. Well—well—you see—DeWitt started talking——

JOHN. (*Quickly*) What?

JAMES. That's all right, John. Why try to hide the truth from an old friend?

DOROTHY. He understands everything.

JAMES. We all make mistakes. John. I made a mistake, too. I ought never to have let you come away. The store needs you. I want you to come back.

DOROTHY. He says you can't believe the way people ask after you.

JOHN. Nonsense, they wouldn't ask after the worst salesman on Long Island.

DOROTHY. He didn't realize how much you knew until you'd gone.

JAMES. John, let's forget the past, and start over again.

DOROTHY. If Mr. Harlow is willing to forgive, you ought to be willing, too.

JOHN. Heaven bless me—what are you two talking about? I haven't anything to forgive.

JAMES. You're right, John. I'm the one should ask forgiveness.

DOROTHY. Mr. Harlow feels he hasn't treated you right.

JOHN. I'm not worrying that he won't meet his last note.

JAMES. The truth of the matter is, John, that day we separated, I figured accounts so fast—I find I didn't pay you enough.

DOROTHY. Isn't that splendid?

JOHN. (*Puzzled*) Let me get this. Do you mean—you want to pay me more money?

JAMES. In a way—yes.

DOROTHY. Promise me—you won't have any erratic ideas and refuse it.

JOHN. Refuse money! (*To JAMES*) How much is your conscience troubling you?

JAMES. You come back, John—and I'll give you a quarter interest in the business—and no money passed.

DOROTHY. Won't it be wonderful—for you to go back to your old store again?

JOHN. I thought we'd decided—we weren't going back—failures.

JAMES. No one need know about the failure, John. I'll advertise your return all over town. It will be a triumphant entry.

JOHN. Thanks, Jim, but I'm not going back to the store. If you want to give me your note—

JAMES. I can't do that. It's crippling me all I can stand to meet the others.

DOROTHY. He doesn't really owe it to you because the agreement was for thirty-five thousand dollars. Don't you see?

JOHN. Yes, Dorothy, I see a great deal.

JAMES. Think it over, John.

DOROTHY. I think you're lucky to have the chance. (To JAMES) You'll find me in the car. (She crosses and exits R.U.)

JOHN. If this is a sample of your day's work in town, you'd better go back to Elmville.

JAMES. I'm giving you good advice.

JOHN. Advice. There isn't any such word in my dictionary.

JAMES. No hard feeling, old man.

JOHN. None.

JAMES. The offer is good at any time.

JOHN. Thanks. When I return to Elmville it will be in my own way.

JAMES. Well, good luck.

JOHN. (Shaking hands with him) Same to you, Jim. (JAMES exits R.U.)

MINERVA. (Opening the L.U. door and standing in the doorway) Would you mind telling Joshua his lunch is ready?

JOHN. Lucky Joshua. (He opens door R.U. MINERVA returns to the kitchen.) She's ready for you, Mr. Tillingbast. (He crosses and exits L.U.)

(After a moment JOSHUA enters R.U., crosses to table c. and sits, facing front. In a moment the door L.U. is opened again, and MINERVA enters, carrying a tray on which reposes a huge pile of buckwheat cakes. JOSHUA turns as the door opens, and as he catches sight of the tray, settles back with a sigh of content.)

MINERVA. (*Crosses to c. table, triumphantly places the pile of cakes in front of him*) You mayn't be able to eat them. I haven't cooked for so long, I'm afraid I've lost my knack.

JOSHUA. (*Cutting into the cakes*) Guess I'll manage to worry them down.

MINERVA. Things aren't quite as handy here as they were at home.

JOSHUA. (*Eating for dear life*) Seem kind of good to be back in a kitchen again?

MINERVA. I ain't hankering yet over cooking three meals a day.

JOSHUA. Um.

MINERVA. How do they taste?

JOSHUA. Great.

MINERVA. Could you eat some more?

JOSHUA. Got any?

MINERVA. John's attending to them. Seems as if he ought to be able to turn them without spoiling them.

JOSHUA. Better not take any chances.

MINERVA. (*Crossing to left*) Guess you're right, though I'd trust him any day before I would that chit of an Annie. (*She exits L.U.*)

(*JOSHUA continues eating, pouring the syrup on with a lavish hand. In a moment MINERVA returns, bringing another plate of hot cakes. She sets them in front of JOSHUA. He begins an immediate attack upon them.*)

MINERVA. I hope they aren't burnt.

JOSHUA. Don't taste it.

MINERVA. Got there just in time.

JOSHUA. (*Stopping suddenly*) Won't you have some?

MINERVA. No—I'd rather watch you eat them.

Guess they don't taste so bad, after you've been doing you own cooking for three months.

JOSHUA. I suppose cooking does get pretty tire-some, but then so does plowing, and planting, and pulling weeds.

MINERVA. It's different when you're earning money for it.

JOSHUA. H'm. *(Pause)* Minerva, I've been thinking.

MINERVA. You do get more time for that when you're alone.

JOSHUA. I've been thinking, Minerva, if it would make you feel any better, how would you like to have fifteen dollars a month to do just as you pleased with?

MINERVA. Joshua, you haven't thought hard enough. I'll bring you some more hot cakes.

JOSHUA. *(Calling after her)* I couldn't eat enough hot cakes in a year to make me think sixty dollars. *(MINERVA exits L.U., banging the door after her. JOSHUA bangs his cup down in his saucer, rises, looks at the cakes, sits down, and begins eating again.)*

MINERVA. *(Returns from L.U. with more hot cakes, and coffee, and places them before JOSHUA)* I've been a thinking.

JOSHUA. H'm.

MINERVA. After having me work for nothing for thirty years, I suppose asking sixty dollars a month was rather a shock to you.

JOSHUA. When the cyclone hit the town wasn't nothing compared to it.

MINERVA. Well, I was thinking, I might reduce the price a little. How would forty-five dollars strike you?

JOSHUA. It strikes me hard, Minerva.

MINERVA. Have some more hot cakes?

JOSHUA. No.

MINERVA. I'm sorry, Joshua. I thought maybe my cooking would taste good to you again.

JOSHUA. It ain't that, Minerva, but I won't stand for no hold-up game.

MINERVA. Well, if you won't eat anything else I'll be trotting along. There was an advertisement in this morning's paper I thought I'd look into. *(She gathers the dishes up, crosses and exits L.U. Returns in a moment, and crosses toward door R.U., as if she was going out.)*

JOSHUA. *(Turning, speaking desperately)* It doesn't sound Scriptural to me, paying your wife a salary. But I want you to be happy. You come back, and I'll give you thirty dollars a month.

MINERVA. *(Stopping at door)* In advance?

JOSHUA. On the first—but what're you going to do with it?

MINERVA. *(Crossing down, holding out her hand)* I'll take it.

JOSHUA. *(Ignoring her hand)* There's a train in two hours. Can you make it?

MINERVA. *(With her hand still held out)* That depends.

JOSHUA. Minerva, don't you trust me?

MINERVA. Of course I do. But it's the first of the month. We may as well start as we are going to keep up.

JOSHUA. *(Taking out his wallet)* The city's changed you terribly, Minerva. You never used to be so mercenary. *(Slowly counting out his money)* There you are. Thirty dollars.

MINERVA. *(Taking the money, holds out her hand again)* And the egg money.

JOSHUA. It's time you came home. *(He counts out some money to her.)*

MINERVA. *(Stands for a moment, while the money lays on the table)* Joshua, I've been thinking. Money ain't everything.

JOSHUA. (*Eagerly*) That's what I've been saying.

MINERVA. I mean—— (*Sudden softness in her voice*) Joshua, don't you want me to come home?

JOSHUA. (*Suddenly taking both her hands*) Minerva! (*He raises her hand to his lips, and kisses it.*)

MINERVA. (*Placing her other hand on his head*) Joshua!

(*As they are in this position, JOHN enters L.U., sees them. With an exclamation of joy he crosses down to them. They start apart, ashamed to have been caught.*)

JOHN. We've won!

MINERVA. Nothing to be proud of. I ain't getting but thirty dollars a month.

JOHN. Why didn't you hold out?

JOSHUA. (*Rising*) Young man, there's one thing I'm going to stipulate before we leave this place. The next time you have any advice to give, don't give it to my family. I can't afford it.

MINERVA. It's cost me a pretty penny, too. If I'd asked only thirty dollars in the first place, I might have gotten it, and saved all the money I've spent.

JOHN. Be fair. Aren't you glad you did it?

JOSHUA. Don't you start anything new.

MINERVA. I guess if I'd wanted to come to New York I could have come without your advice.

JOHN. When you're home, slaving on the farm again, you can both forget you ever knew me.

JOSHUA. Not with the first of the month coming round regular.

MINERVA. Joshua, you'd better go and get the tickets. I only live around the next corner. I'll pack and meet you at the gate.

JOHN. Your sister can send your trunk. You'd better take a taxi.

JOSHUA. Taxi!

MINERVA. I reckon I've got money enough to pay for it.

JOHN. She can't get on the street car with her grip.

JOSHUA. If you're as flush as that you can buy your ticket. Taxi?

MINERVA. (*To JOHN*) Did you ever hear anything like that? Would you give him the money for your ticket?

JOHN. I certainly—— (*Checks himself, then walks away*) You settle it between you.

MINERVA. That's right, get me into a tight place, then desert me.

JOSHUA. (*Holding up a warning finger to JOHN*) Don't backslide.

MINERVA. (*Plumping herself into a chair at c. table*) I never heard of a cook yet who didn't get her fare paid to her position.

JOSHUA. I wouldn't think of calling you—a cook.

MINERVA. You're paying me wages, aren't you?

JOSHUA. (*To JOHN, helplessly*) What am I going to do?

(*JOHN hesitates for a moment, then crosses to JOSHUA and whispers in his ear. JOSHUA's face breaks into a smile. He crosses down to MINERVA.*)

JOSHUA. I'd better come and help you pack, Minerva. (*With a slight sigh*) I reckon you're right about the cook.

MINERVA. I—I didn't really mean that about the ticket, Joshua.

JOHN. (*Triumphantly*) I told you it would work.

JOSHUA. (*Crossing with MINERVA to R.*) No more

advice from you, or she'll have me paying for the taxi.

MINERVA. (*At door*) No, the eggs are going to pay for that. (*They exit R.U. With a half laugh, half sigh, JOHN exits L.U.*)

(*The door R.U. opens, and DOROTHY and DEWITT enter, evidently continuing a conversation. They cross down to C. and sit, DOROTHY at head of table, facing front, DEWITT on her L.*)

DEWITT. The situation is ridiculous. You can't go on like this. (*Leaning forward and speaking earnestly*) If he won't take a hint, you'll have to tell him plainly.

DOROTHY. I could never explain to him—never.

DEWITT. Then don't tell him any more about it until you are settled in your new place. It will be too late then for him to alter anything.

DOROTHY. No. Whatever I do, John shall know. It is going to hurt him terribly, but not half as much as if I deceived him, and he found out later.

DEWITT. Do you have to tell him—the exact truth?

DOROTHY. Yes. (*With sudden decision*) And I'm going to tell him now. (*She rises quickly, crosses to L.U. door, opens it, and calls*) John.

JOHN. (*Answering from within*) Yes, Dorothy. (*He enters L.U., closing the door behind him. DOROTHY crosses to C. again and sits in her old chair.*)

JOHN. (*Crosses to C. and stands by DOROTHY'S R. There is an awkward pause for a moment, broken by JOHN, trying to speak lightly*) Another conference?

DEWITT. (*Quickly*) Dorothy has something she thinks you should know.

JOHN. (*Pointedly*) She can tell me.

DOROTHY. You do know—most of it.

JOHN. (*Sitting on her R.*) You mean—our giving up here?

DOROTHY. Yes. Everyone thinks you should go back to Elmville.

JOHN. Everyone?

DOROTHY. Mr. Harlow and I.

DEWITT. And I.

JOHN. (*With dignity*) Thanks for the interest. Please understand, if I go back to Elmville it will be when and how I choose.

DEWITT. Then you can't blame Dorothy for doing what she chooses.

JOHN. Have I?

DOROTHY. You don't approve?

JOHN. Of what?

DOROTHY. My tea room on Fifth Avenue.

JOHN. There's nothing I'd like better than to see your name in gilt letters on Fifth Avenue.

DEWITT. She wants her tea room—alone.

JOHN. That's quite understood between us.

DEWITT. Of course—I shall be there to supervise it.

JOHN. I see. (*Turning to DOROTHY*) Besides supervising it, Dorothy, is your friend also going to lend you the money to open it?

DOROTHY. You can't do it, John.

DEWITT. What's the objection to my doing it?

JOHN. (*Persistently*) Is he, Dorothy?

DOROTHY. (*Reluctantly*) Yes.

DEWITT. I consider it a good business proposition.

DOROTHY. If I fail, I have my house.

JOHN. (*To DEWITT*) Do you realize that house is all this little girl has in the world?

DEWITT. I hope I know how to lose like a gentleman.

JOHN. (*With meaning*) I hope you do.

DOROTHY. (*With spirit*) Mr. Clinton has done

nothing to warrant your speaking to him like that.

DEWITT. (*Insolently*) Oh, I don't mind. I only consulted him to please you.

JOHN. Excuse me. I didn't know you were consulting me.

DEWITT. You're right. It's all settled. This little girl has had nothing but misery in this place. If a tea room on Fifth Avenue will make her happy, I'm going to see that she gets it.

JOHN. (*To DOROTHY, speaking gently*) Please, don't do this. I'll see that you have this tea room, alone. If you'll only have a little patience.

DOROTHY. Patience—patience. That's all I've heard for months.

DEWITT. May I ask why you object to her borrowing the money from me?

JOHN. (*Rising*) Yes, you may ask. I won't give my reasons. But I'd rather see her dead than under any obligations to you.

DOROTHY. (*Springing to her feet*) John!

DEWITT. (*Insolently*) Only what I expected.

JOHN. Then for once I haven't disappointed you.

DOROTHY. Do you realize you're insulting me as well as him?

DEWITT. I may be dull, but I fail to see the difference between your being her partner—and me. I fancy she hasn't been here three months with you without a few remarks being made.

JOHN. (*Springing at him*) You take that back!

DOROTHY. (*Running between them, trying to pull them apart*) John—DeWitt—please!

DEWITT. (*Stepping back*) I'm coming back later to settle with him.

JOHN. Any time—when we're alone.

DOROTHY. (*To DEWITT*) Please go.

DEWITT. (*With studied politeness*) My dear girl, don't think that I mind—him. (*Glances superciliously at JOHN, crosses and exits R.U.*)

DOROTHY. (*Turning angrily on JOHN*) I'm only staying to tell you that I never want to hear from you—I never want to see you again.

JOHN. Dorothy, don't let us talk now. You're not yourself.

DOROTHY. Not myself? I wonder how much you think my friendship will stand?

JOHN. You don't understand. You think I'm hurt because we aren't going on together——

DOROTHY. (*Interrupting*) That's it. That's why you have to play the dog in the manger.

JOHN. (*Patiently*) Little girl, you've never let me forget that I'm older than you. It's because I am older that I see things clearer. Have you ever asked yourself—if this man thinks so much of you, why doesn't he ask you to marry him?

DOROTHY. You think because you want to marry me every man I meet wants to. You sent my brother away to live his own life. I'm going to live mine. I came here to forget Elmville. When I leave here, I want to forget—— (*She stops, turns suddenly, crosses, and exits R.U.*)

JOHN. (*Calling after her*) Dorothy! (*He stands for a moment, then turns and walks to the flowers on desk. Picks up a bunch of rosemary, looks at it for a moment, then says, a little sadly*) There's rosemary—that's for remembrance. (*He buries his head in the flowers.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

TIME: *October 1st.*

SCENE: *Same as Act II—with the following change:
The door R.U. has the inscription*

JOHN BLAKE'S TEA ROOM

Also

BLAKE & PETTINGILL

REAL ESTATE & INSURANCE

The R.U. corner of the tea room has been made into a small office. It contains simply a long table with a couple of chairs back of it. To the left of table a typewriter desk, open, with typewriter on it. Chair in front. Hatrack above desk.

On the wall back of desk, side by side, hang the following two signs:

On the right—

I DON'T GIVE ADVICE

On the left—

I DON'T TAKE ADVICE

When the curtain rises WILLIAM is sitting at the left end of the table, JOHN at the right end. ANNIE is sitting at the typewriter, working.

ANNIE. *(Pulls the sheet of paper out of the machine with a jerk)* There I go, writing September

again. I never will remember it's the first of the month.

WILLIAM. I don't want to remember it. The first of the month isn't my lucky day.

JOHN. Same here.

WILLIAM. Do you remember—three months ago?

JOHN. (*Sadly*) Do I remember?

WILLIAM. That was the day that man blew in who was going to buy our promontory.

JOHN. Oh—that. (*Pause.*) Funny thing you never heard of him again.

WILLIAM. The way he looked that promontory over, you'd have thought he wished there was ten of them instead of one. Something queer about him. I'm just as glad we didn't sell it to him.

JOHN. I'm not. Looks to me as if it would take the rest of our lives to sell ten feet of it.

WILLIAM. Business might be worse. We've managed to live—somehow.

ANNIE. Not forgetting the help you've gotten from the versatile kid, meaning me. Salesgirl—waitress—typist. I wonder what next.

WILLIAM. Housekeeper—for two.

ANNIE. Your vision holds out wonderfully.

JOHN. It's lucky for us there are places to sell besides that promontory.

WILLIAM. (*Rises, crosses to hatrack*) Well, I won't do any business wasting my day talking to you two. (*Takes hat and exits R.U.*)

JOHN. Poor Bill. He's eating his heart out over the lost sale of that land, and too fine to show it.

ANNIE. Bill says he won't give up until you've got the money out that you sunk in it.

JOHN. (*Rising*) I've buried that money and forgotten all about it. If anyone phones, I'll be back in an hour. (*Crosses to rack, picks up hat, turns toward R.U. door, when it is opened and MINERVA TILLINGHAST stands in the doorway.*)

JOHN. Mrs. Tillinghast!

MINERVA. Same.

ANNIE. (*Jumps up and speaks indignantly*) Of all nervy things, your coming here, when you've said all over Elmville—— (*Imitates MINERVA*) "If it hadn't been for Mr. Blake, me and Joshua wouldn't never have separated, and if he dares offer me advice again——"

MINERVA. (*Interrupting*) Ain't changed one bit, be ye? (*Looking around*) And looks to me as if you were doing about as much business.

ANNIE. Looks ain't everything. If they were—— (*With a meaning glance at MINERVA.*)

JOHN. Annie!

MINERVA. (*To JOHN*) I may have said a few things that maybe I ought not to have said, but I don't bear no hard feeling, and—— (*With a vicious glance at ANNIE*)——if that young lady allows you to see people alone, I'd be obliged——

JOHN. Of course you may. (*To ANNIE*) Look up the records on the Cumming's house, will you?

ANNIE. (*Rises. As she passes JOHN*) Don't forget the motto! I feel it coming!

JOHN. Forewarned is forearmed. (*ANNIE exits R.U.*)

MINERVA. What she mean—"I feel it coming"?

JOHN. Oh, you know Annie. Sit down here, Mrs. Tillinghast. (*Places chair for her in front of table down C.*)

MINERVA. You don't want to believe everything that girl tells you. (*Sits*) Many a time I've said to Joshua—I don't know anyone who gives better advice than John Blake.

JOHN. What does it matter how you feel about me? Joshua and you are together again—that's what counts.

MINERVA. (*Dubiously*) Yes, we're together.

JOHN. How are things going?

MINERVA. Might be worse—and they might be lots better. I always did say there wasn't but one Joshua Tillinghast in this world.

JOHN. And you got him.

MINERVA. Yes, I got him. (*Pause*) What would you say if I told you he hadn't paid me one cent since I'd been back?

JOHN. (*Forgetting himself*) The old miser!

MINERVA. I've said worse than that to him, but every time I speak about it, he laughs and says you and John Blake were so smart, why don't you fix it up again? This morning, being the first of the month, and not a cent in sight, I up and said to him: "Joshua," said I, "I'm a-going to take you at your word." Now, John Blake, I want your advice.

JOHN. I'd fix him. I'd—— (*He stops suddenly, looks at the motto on the wall, rises, takes the motto, "I Don't Give Advice," down, crosses to table c., sits with his eyes fixed on the motto.*)

MINERVA. (*Leans forward and reads the motto*) Well, of course, I don't know as you'd call it advice. I meant I'd like to talk it over with you.

JOHN. What—what do you want me to do?

MINERVA. I dunno. One thing I know—if I ever leave Joshua again, it will be for good. I certainly liked the store windows in New York.

JOHN. Times are better now, too. You'd probably walk right into a position.

MINERVA. Course I would. (*Sighs*) Pretty hard, after you've had your own home for thirty years, to be forced to work out for a living.

JOHN. I drove past your place the other day. The hens looked fine.

MINERVA. Laying great.

JOHN. Getting good prices?

MINERVA. Fine. Oh, I can get along without his thirty dollars a month—it ain't that——

JOHN. The garden looked mighty pretty.

MINERVA. It is a pretty place. Joshua planted all my favorite flowers this year.

JOHN. You looked mighty happy—working there together.

MINERVA. We be happy. And how he has eaten since I got back! Gained ten pounds.

JOHN. Money is such a small part of happiness, Minerva. (*Rises and crosses to left*) If you are with the person you love—seeing him—able to do for him——

MINERVA. Land sakes, if you ain't talking just the way I feel——

JOHN. Minerva, you don't want to leave Joshua.

MINERVA. No, I don't expect I do. (*With spirit*) But he's going to be asked for that check every day of the month.

(*Door R.U. opens, and JOSHUA enters. He crosses to them, looks rather anxiously from one to the other, but speaks aggressively to JOHN.*)

JOSHUA. H'm, so you two have been making up, have you?

MINERVA. We always did understand one another.

JOSHUA. (*To MINERVA*) What's he been telling you?

MINERVA. (*Very softly*) That there's bigger things in life than money, Joshua.

JOSHUA. Well, I'll be—— (*Triumphantly*) Same thing I've been telling you for years. (*Holds out his hand to JOHN*) I knew you'd agree with me.

JOHN. (*Takes his hand. Holds motto*) I told Minerva what I've come to believe. The big thing in life is having the person you love near you—to do the little things for him that bring the smile to his face, the glad feeling around your own heart.

JOSHUA. (*Showing he is touched*) As far as that

goes, it wasn't the thirty dollars that I minded—it was the way it was done that hurt. *(To MINERVA)* I'll write you a check for thirty dollars right now.

MINERVA. When we get home will be time enough, Joshua.

JOSHUA. No, I'm a-going to write it now.

JOHN. *(Moving papers out of the way at table R.U.)* Sit here.

JOSHUA. *(Sits, takes out checkbook, writes as he talks)* That's the spirit, Minerva. You be fair to me and I'll be fair to you. *(Comes to her and hands her check)* Stay in town and take the day a-spending it.

MINERVA. That coat of yours is getting pretty shabby. I saw some fine ones in the window as I came along.

JOSHUA. *(To JOHN)* A little matter about the farm has been worrying me for some time. I'll drop in next week and ask your advice about it.

JOHN. By all—— *(Stops, turns the motto around so that JOSHUA can see it)* That means everyone.

JOSHUA. Oh, I just want to talk things over. Know you'll agree with me. *(To MINERVA)* Come on, Minerva. I see the prettiest hat down street——

MINERVA. *(Rises and follows JOSHUA to door R.U., turns to JOHN)* I'd rather have your advice any day than Jim Harlow's. *(She and JOSHUA exit R.U. together, both talking. JOHN looks at the motto, laughs.)*

ANNIE. *(Enters from R.U.)* Did you remember?

JOHN. Just in time.

ANNIE. The idea of her coming here again.

JOHN. They went away happy, Annie. That's what counts, not how they feel toward us. *(Puts motto on table R.U., and takes up his hat)* I'll have to hustle to keep that appointment. *(Exits R.U.)*

(ANNIE crosses to table, picks up the motto, laughs, crosses, climbs on chair, hangs motto, gets down,

crosses to her desk. WILLIAM and CLINTON enter R.U.)

ANNIE. You!

CLINTON. (*Crossing and taking her hands*) If such a thing was possible—you've grown prettier.

WILLIAM. (*Quickly*) About that land——

CLINTON. (*Laughs*) Doesn't trust me. He doesn't know that my principal reason for coming here again is to make you two young people happy.

WILLIAM. The land will cost just the same.

CLINTON. You're not to be caught with molasses, are you? (*Crosses to c. table.*)

ANNIE. Why didn't we hear from you? (*Follows with WILLIAM.*)

CLINTON. I've had a nasty fight on my hands all summer, and I didn't want to talk business until I could hear you set the date for the wedding.

ANNIE. You're really going to buy it?

CLINTON. Unless someone has cut in ahead of me.

ANNIE. No, you don't have to come early to avoid the rush.

WILLIAM. You understand, of course, that the land can be sold only subject to restrictions. The hotel must be worth at least——

CLINTON. (*Interrupts*) If my money was good, I suppose you could be induced to sell it for something beside a hotel?

WILLIAM. What else could you want it for?

CLINTON. The sand gravel.

WILLIAM. (*Sinks into a chair R. of c. table*) Jehosophat!

CLINTON. I've purposely kept away because I didn't want the opposition to know my moves. (*Hands WILLIAM his card*) I'm president of an independent company that is fighting the trust. I'm going to beat them if I have to buy every promontory on Long Island.

WILLIAM. Sand! (*Pause*) This is terrible. After the vision I've had of the rows of trees, the cottages—— (*Rises*) I'm sorry, Mr. Clinton, I can't let you have it.

CLINTON. Come, come, you're not serious.

WILLIAM. You can't understand. That land has been my dream—my vision. Many a moonlight night I've stood on the spot where my home is to rise——

CLINTON. Can't you train your vision on some other spot?

ANNIE. Of course he can.

CLINTON. You won't let him get away with this?

ANNIE. Not much. (*Turns decisively to WILLIAM*) Bill, I gave you my promise if you sold that land—but if you let this chance go by—I'll take it back.

WILLIAM. Can't *you* understand?

CLINTON. How long do you think the prettiest girl on Long Island is going to wait for your vision? Besides—— (*Takes his arm confidentially and going R.*) Without sand you can't make cement—and without cement you can't build cellars—and without cellars you can't have houses—so if you must have your vision—there you are.

WILLIAM. I never thought of that.

CLINTON. Think now. Get your partner. Draw up the agreement, and the money is yours the moment you show me a clear title to the land.

WILLIAM. The agreement has been ready for three months. We only have to change the date.

CLINTON. Your partner won't have any vision that needs adjustment?

ANNIE. I should say not. He'll be back by the time you get the agreement from the lawyer.

CLINTON. Going to invite me to the wedding?

WILLIAM. (*Answering*) Well, I suppose if you hadn't bought that land there wouldn't be any wedding.

ANNIE. If you come, will you do something for me—something wonderful?

CLINTON. Just ask me.

ANNIE. I haven't any father. Would—would you give me away?

CLINTON. You bet I will. But I hate to do it. *(He takes her hand, turns to WILLIAM, takes his, joins their hands together)* According to Elmville custom, you may kiss one another. *(WILLIAM and ANNIE in each other's arms.)*

ANNIE. Bill, I can be an Easter bride.

WILLIAM. You mean October.

CLINTON. In that case, I think we'd better start for the lawyer. *(WILLIAM and CLINTON start for the door R.U. CLINTON turns)* I'll be waiting for that invitation.

ANNIE. I shan't forget.

WILLIAM. *(As they exit R.U., commences to talk very fast)* About those other promontories on Long Island——

(With a laugh, ANNIE sits down at table c., puts out her hands, begins to turn her engagement ring round, hums softly the wedding march. The door R.U. is cautiously opened a crack. DOROTHY peeps in. She looks around the room, then calls very softly)

DOROTHY. Annie!

ANNIE. *(Turns, jumps up, exclaims)* Dorothy!

DOROTHY. *(Finger on lip)* Are you alone?

ANNIE. Yes.

(DOROTHY closes the door and crosses to c. Girls into one another's arms. After a moment DOROTHY raises her head and wipes her eyes.)

DOROTHY. How foolish I am. It's so good to see you again.

ANNIE. Won't Mr. Blake be surprised!

DOROTHY. I don't want to see him. That is, not just yet.

ANNIE. He won't be back for half an hour. (*Placing chairs L.C.*) We'll have time to tell one another everything. (*Both sit, DOROTHY L., ANNIE R.*)

DOROTHY. I—I haven't anything to tell. I want to know about everyone here. How long have John and Bill been partners? Are they busy? Have they sold that land?

ANNIE. Where shall I begin? John's been wonderful—got out and hustled. Half the people in this city are trying to sell their houses to the other half.

DOROTHY. I don't care about that. I want to know if—if——

ANNIE. Yes, he does.

DOROTHY. Oh, Annie, he can't.

ANNIE. He does. Do you?

DOROTHY. Do I? But I'll never let him know—never.

ANNIE. Then why did you come here?

DOROTHY. Never mind. Tell me about yourself.

ANNIE. (*Holds out her hand with the ring on it*) There's going to be another ring on that finger—soon.

DOROTHY. Then they did sell that land?

ANNIE. Bill's out with the man now. But it's sure this time.

DOROTHY. I saw them go by. But I didn't want to meet anyone until I knew—about him.

ANNIE. Something is wrong—tell me. Your tea room——

DOROTHY. (*Shakes her head*) Gone. I'm just a failure.

ANNIE. Nonsense. Mr. Blake says the only failure is in giving up, and you'd never do that.

DOROTHY. Yes, I have. (*Rises, dries her eyes*)

I'm a selfish little beast, just thinking of myself. I hope you and Bill will be happy all your lives.

ANNIE. (*Rises*) You and Mr. Blake are going to be happy, too.

DOROTHY. I never expect to be happy again. (*Throws back her head*) But don't you ever tell anyone in Elmville. I won't have them sympathizing with me. (*Breaks down and sobs on ANNIE'S shoulder.*)

ANNIE. There, there, what do you care what they say——

(*The door R.U. opens and JOHN enters. DOROTHY looks up, quickly dries her eyes.*)

DOROTHY. I—I thought—you said—he'd be gone half an hour.

JOHN. (*Crossing to her with his hand held out*) You weren't going—before I came back?

ANNIE. I'm going to lunch. (*Grabs her hat from rack and quickly exits R.U.*)

JOHN. Dorothy, didn't you think I'd want to see you—or—didn't you want to see me?

DOROTHY. Oh—no—no——

JOHN. I'm glad it wasn't that. Come, sit down. (*Places chair for her by table c. Both sit. DOROTHY L. of table, JOHN back.*) So you remembered us at last.

DOROTHY. (*Quickly*) I'm expecting Percy to meet me here.

JOHN. Fine.

DOROTHY. Family reunions aren't always fine.

JOHN. (*Startled*) Dorothy, what's wrong?

DOROTHY. Of course I can hardly wait for him to get here—but—— (*Takes a telegram out of her bag, hands it to JOHN*) I got this two days ago. It's from Chicago. Read it.

JOHN. (*Takes telegram*) "Meet you at Blake's

Friday. Want to see you both. Sunk all my money in a gold mine. Percy."

DOROTHY. Poor Percy.

JOHN. My fault. I *would give advice*.

DOROTHY. He'd have gone anyway. We mustn't blame him. He did his best. (*Turns away, slightly tearful*) You don't know, John, how hard people try sometimes to do their best, and what miserable failures they make of it.

JOHN. Aren't you forgetting—my failures?

DOROTHY. No one would think of calling you a failure. We must be very kind to Percy.

JOHN. No mollycoddling. (*Whimsically*) After all, you may have to take him in your tea room.

DOROTHY. (*Rises, stands with her back to him*) I—I haven't any tea room.

JOHN. (*Rises*) Oh! I never dreamed—I am sorry.

DOROTHY. It's all right. (*Turns to him*) You'd know soon enough.

JOHN. There's only one thing for all of us to do. Forget the past—and start all over again.

DOROTHY. That's so easy to say—forget. (*Buries her face in her hands.*)

JOHN. What happened—tell me?

DOROTHY. (*Raising her head*) Everything—just as you said it would. I had my tea room—and he wanted me to pay—in his way.

JOHN. Where is he?

DOROTHY. What does that matter now? (*Turns, holds out hands pleadingly*) John, help Percy to forget—help me to forget.

JOHN. (*Takes her hands, tries to turn the situation with a laugh*) You know, little girl, anything an old man can do——

DOROTHY. Don't be ridiculous. You're not old.

JOHN. (*Suddenly wise*) Yes, yes. Six months ago I was an old man. Why—— (*Whimsically*)

I've grown so old I don't even give advice any more.

DOROTHY. You're only nine years and eight months older than I am.

JOHN. Nearly ten years. It used to hurt me to have you say it, but I've got past all that now. Why, I even like to think of that old baby carriage.

DOROTHY. Please!

JOHN. All right, we'll forget the past—but the ten years is there, all the same. I'll be the best father in the world to Percy.

(R.U. door opens, and PERCY enters. DOROTHY runs into his arms. Then they cross to C. and PERCY takes JOHN's hand. PERCY is dressed in extreme Western fashion, even to cowboy hat, but everything is of the best.)

PERCY. Glad to see you again, old man—but why the fatherly interest?

DOROTHY. Don't you feel a bit badly about it, Percy, I've been a failure, too. Don't you remember how happy we were together, and I worried about what you'd like for dinner?

PERCY. I say, Dorothy, you ought to taste the dinners we set up in our shack.

DOROTHY. Shack! You poor boy. Won't it be wonderful to be in a real home again?

PERCY. All right, if I can sleep outdoors. (To JOHN) How's the real estate business?

JOHN. Not exactly booming, but if you want to join in with a growing concern, there's always room for one more.

PERCY. Thanks. I'll think it over. (To DOROTHY) How's the tea room?

DOROTHY. Closed.

PERCY. You should worry. I'll look after you.

DOROTHY. I think it's wonderful of you to be so brave about it.

PERCY. Brave?

DOROTHY. John says there is only one thing for us to do—forget the past year——

PERCY. Nothing doing. (*With a sudden thought*) Didn't you get my telegram?

DOROTHY. Of course. You weren't to blame, if you did sink your money in a gold mine. I've always read they were waiting for tenderfoots in those horrid mining camps.

PERCY. (*Laughs immoderately*) So that explains the mother and father interest. Out in God's country a gold mine means anything that gives big returns.

DOROTHY. But you said you'd sunk your money.

PERCY. Sure. But I didn't say I'd left it sunk.

DOROTHY. Oh! Then I'm the only failure.

PERCY. Don't like that word. I'll take you back and show you some of my eating places.

DOROTHY. Then you did open a tea room?

PERCY. Tea room—for the cowboys. Not much. I wanted to live.

JOHN. Out with the big news.

PERCY. Well—after I'd eaten at a few places in Idaho and Montana I had one thought in my mind—a square meal. I fell in with a man who'd been cook in a lumber camp. He cooked—I hustled. Just opening our two hundred and sixty-fifth lunch stand. Had to jump into Chicago on business—it was a good chance to come back and see you—and here we are.

JOHN. Found something for company beside the chipmunks, eh?

PERCY. (*Takes a photograph out of his coat pocket*) Here's a picture of one. (*Hands the photograph to DOROTHY.*)

DOROTHY. She is pretty.

PERCY. Prettiest girl in Idaho. And I have her

buffaloed into thinking I'm the finest man that ever came into Idaho.

DOROTHY. Oh! (*Breaking down*) No—nobody wants me any more.

PERCY. Cut it. You're going back with me.

JOHN. You two had better settle this alone. (*To PERCY*) I'm mighty glad for you, Percy.

PERCY. I can thank you. If it hadn't been for your advice I'd never have dared to do it.

JOHN. It's fine of you to say that.

PERCY. Come on, Dorothy, let's give the place the once-over. (*Crosses with her to R.U. door.*)

JOHN. Come back when you've seen the town.

PERCY. You bet. (*To DOROTHY*) Come on, Sis. We've the greatest system in our lunch rooms— (*Ad lib. as they exit R.U.*)

JOHN. (*Stands looking after them, a smile breaks over his face, he says, softly*) Nine years and eight months.

(*The R.U. door opens and WILLIAM and CLINTON enter.*)

WILLIAM. (*Crosses to JOHN, speaks in his most flowery manner*) John, permit me to have the pleasure of introducing one of the great industrial leaders of America—

CLINTON. (*Holds out his hand to JOHN*) He means I'm the modest president of a modest sand company.

JOHN. I'm the modest president of a modest real estate company.

WILLIAM. Has Annie told you?

JOHN. Told me? What?

CLINTON. I want to buy your land.

JOHN. (*Takes his hand again*) I'm happy—I'm exceedingly happy to meet you. Won't you have a

chair? (*Places chair forward, R. of C.*) Won't you have a cigar? (*Takes out a cigar.*)

CLINTON. Thanks. (*Takes cigar.*)

WILLIAM. He wants to buy, but not for a summer hotel. We must give up that cherished dream.

CLINTON. I trust that won't hinder us from doing business.

JOHN. Not for a moment. What are you willing to pay?

CLINTON. I'll pay the same for a sand heap that I would for the land for a summer hotel with a stately row of elm trees lining each side of the road——

JOHN. I think you and I can do business. (*Both laugh.*)

WILLIAM. All you have to do is to go to the lawyer, sign your name, and as soon as we show a clear title—Annie is mine.

JOHN. And—— (*With a sudden thought*) Sand heap. I wonder what that would be worth.

CLINTON. Close with me to-day, and I'll give you a thousand dollars an acre.

WILLIAM. A thousand dollars——

JOHN. Two hundred and fifty thousand—— Bill, it doesn't sound right. (*Sinks into nearest chair.*)

CLINTON. It isn't—it's just plain profiteering.

WILLIAM. Those papers will be ready.

CLINTON. Don't be afraid. I never go back on my word.

JOHN. There's many a slip——

CLINTON. I'm ready. What do you do when you go out, lock up?

JOHN. We usually wait for Annie.

WILLIAM. But on this special occasion—we'll lock up.

CLINTON. It isn't every day you sell a sand hill.

WILLIAM. But this is only the beginning. There are other sand banks on Long Island——

CLINTON. Come on, or you'll have me buying the ocean.

JOHN. (*Fumbles in his pockets*) One minute. I think I left the key to my car inside. (*Exits L.U.*)

WILLIAM. Do you know, that's a great idea of yours, buying up the ocean. Only the other day I was reading of a new process of obtaining salt, and——

(*R.U. door opens and DEWITT CLINTON enters.*)

DEWITT. (*Surprised, but very cool*) Hello, Father.

CLINTON. Hello, son. What are you doing here?

DEWITT. *I might ask the same question.*

CLINTON. I'm here on business.

DEWITT. So am I.

CLINTON. Since when?

DEWITT. If it ends satisfactorily, you shall be the first to know.

CLINTON. I'll try and wait. (*To WILLIAM*) Excuse me. This is my son. DeWitt, Mr. Pettingill.

WILLIAM. (*Shakes hands with him*) Are you, too, interested in our fair land?

CLINTON. It's a safe bet an interest in a fair lady brings him here.

DEWITT. You win.

CLINTON. (*To WILLIAM*) I wonder what's keeping Blake?

DEWITT. (*Starts nervously*) Mr. Blake! They said downstairs he was out.

CLINTON. Mistake. He's inside. I'm waiting for him.

DEWITT. Er—er—I think I'll wait outside for my friend. (*He crosses quickly to R.U. door, and is almost out when JOHN enters L.U.*)

JOHN. (*Not noticing DEWITT at first, speaks*

quickly) I'm going to tie this key—— (*Stops short as he sees DEWITT*) You here?

CLINTON. Well, so you two know one another.

JOHN. (*Turns to CLINTON*) Pardon me, but in the excitement, I didn't catch your name.

CLINTON. Clinton—Edward Clinton. It seems you have met my son.

DEWITT. Once or twice. I'll explain everything later. (*Turns to go.*)

JOHN. One moment. Before you go, there are one or two things you'll explain to me.

DEWITT. You attend to your own affairs.

JOHN. I intend to. (*To CLINTON*) I'm sorry, Mr. Clinton, I didn't know your name before. Though if I had, I wouldn't have dreamed you were the father of such a blackguard.

DEWITT. Careful. (*To his father*) Are you going to allow him to talk to me like that?

CLINTON. Don't be a fool. (*To JOHN*) Evidently there's some misunderstanding between you two. Let's finish our business first—then I'll bear both your stories. If my son is in the wrong—he'll apologize.

JOHN. To the girl.

CLINTON. (*To DEWITT*) The girl you came here to see?

DEWITT. Yes. She's no more his than she is mine. She's thrown both of us over——

JOHN. But not for the same reason.

DEWITT. How do you know?

JOHN. She's told me.

DEWITT. I was a fool. I lost my head. I'm willing to do the right thing——

JOHN. (*To CLINTON*) Mr. Clinton, she's a girl I had asked to marry me—she refused, but we went into business together here—she met your son. She is young—he fascinated her. Made her discontented

with her old life—and was too much of a cur to ask her to enter his—as his wife.

DEWITT. I want to now. That's why I'm here.

JOHN. I'd kill you before I'd let you marry her.

DEWITT. Because you can't have her yourself. You were always a jealous fool.

JOHN. (*Springing at him*) You take that back!

CLINTON. (*Steps between them*) When can I see this girl?

JOHN. She'll be here—soon.

CLINTON. Good. (*To DEWITT*) Be back in half an hour. Anything you have to say to the girl will be said before me. (*To JOHN*) We'll put our deal through first.

DEWITT. You're a fine father to do business with a man who calls me a blackguard and threatens to kill me.

JOHN. Don't worry. I'm not doing business with your father. (*To CLINTON*) I'm sorry, Mr. Clinton, but I can't sell you my land.

CLINTON. What's love got to do with business?

WILLIAM. (*Lays his hand on JOHN's shoulder*) I know how you feel, but Mr. Clinton is right. You can't mix love and business.

JOHN. I'll make it up to you, Bill, if it takes me all my life, but I can't touch a cent of his money. (*To CLINTON*) Mr. Clinton, after you've seen the girl, I think you'll understand how I feel. (*He crosses quickly, and exits R.U.*)

DEWITT. I tell you, Father, that's the kind of a nut he is.

CLINTON. Go to your car and stay there until this girl comes.

DEWITT. I insist that you stop treating me like a child.

CLINTON. In one minute I'll forget you're my son. Go.

(DEWITT mumbles, but crosses and exits R.U.)

CLINTON. Young man, if you ever used your brain, use it now.

WILLIAM. (*Sits down, disconsolate*) You don't know John.

CLINTON. I know I'm going to have that land. This girl—— Is she as full of romantic notions as Blake?

WILLIAM. Search me. I'm not even sure that she loves him.

CLINTON. If you can't think, *I'll* have to. He proposes to her—she turns him down—to the city—fascinated—disillusioned—comes back to him—why? (*Turns suddenly to WILLIAM*) Has she seen anyone beside Blake? Anyone she'd confide in?

WILLIAM. Wait a minute. Annie may have seen her.

CLINTON. Where's Annie?

WILLIAM. Gone to lunch, I guess.

CLINTON. (*Seizing WILLIAM by the arm*) Find her. Drag her here. If you don't sell me that land, I'll elope with her myself.

WILLIAM. If I don't sell you that land, I'll throw your son off the promontory. (*Taking hat from rack*) With three hundred and sixty-five days to the year, why did he pick this one day to show up? (*At R.U. door, as it is opened, ANNIE enters.*)

ANNIE. What's little bright eyes doing outside?

WILLIAM. Hush. He's Mr. Clinton's son.

ANNIE. Well—— (*Turns to MR. CLINTON, consolingly*) Never mind, Mr. Clinton, we can't help our relatives.

CLINTON. I'll take a day off to inquire into my son's lurid past. In the meantime—we need you—(*Takes her arm and down to C. To WILLIAM*) Tell her—but make it snappy.

WILLIAM. John was just going to sign the agreement——

CLINTON. My son appeared—he learned he was my son—fireworks—no dealings with the father.

ANNIE. I'll never set another wedding day.
(*Sinks into chair L. of table.*)

WILLIAM. Did you see Dorothy?

ANNIE. Yes.

CLINTON. Does she love this Blake?

ANNIE. Crazy about him.

WILLIAM. He's crazy about her.

CLINTON. I'll say he is. Any man that lets two hundred and fifty thousand dollars go by—I'll say he's crazy.

ANNIE. Two hundred and fifty thousand——
(*On her feet*) Anything I can do?

CLINTON. Much. I've particular reasons for wanting that land, not altogether for its value—but if the opposition hears I've lost it—well, they're not going to hear it, that's all.

ANNIE. You mean—you'd pay a bonus to get it?

CLINTON. No, I didn't mean just that. However, you get this Dorothy to get this Blake to sell that land, and—well—I'll give you a wedding check for five thousand dollars.

WILLIAM. I won't have it.

ANNIE. Don't you see it means your happiness and mine—as well as Dorothy's and John's. (*Claps her hands enthusiastically*) We'll have a double wedding.

CLINTON. If Bill doesn't take you, I will. I could use a partner like you in my business.

ANNIE. The partnership we're going into isn't for business—it's for love.

WILLIAM. (*With ANNIE in his arms*) You hear that?

ANNIE. (*Breaking away, speaks energetically*) Bill, remove that car and what's inside of it. Don't

come back for an hour. (*To CLINTON*) I'll have Dorothy here in two seconds. If you can't manage her, I'll be waiting outside. (*Exits R.U.*)

CLINTON. After her. Get my son out of the road. Seeing him will be like a red flag to a bull. And while you're doing it, get the vision of the other sand heaps that I haven't bought.

WILLIAM. (*At door R.U.*) Just the same—my last vision cost you two hundred and fifty thousand— (*Exits R.U. Closes door with bang. Honk of horn is heard. CLINTON crosses, reads the mottoes on the wall, laughs, crosses to C.*)

(*Street door is opened. ANNIE enters R.U., followed by DOROTHY. CLINTON crosses to them with his hand outstretched.*)

ANNIE. Mr. Clinton, this is Dorothy Webb.

CLINTON. (*Registers that he instantly likes her*) Miss Webb, I hope you'll shake hands with me.

DOROTHY. (*Takes his hand*) Why not? I've heard wonderful things about you—from your son.

CLINTON. I'm sorry he wasn't equally frank about you. (*ANNIE exits L.U.*)

CLINTON. (*Places chair for DOROTHY at C.*) Won't you sit down? (*DOROTHY sits, CLINTON sits in chair on her left.*)

CLINTON. I hope you'll understand if circumstances force me to speak very plainly.

DOROTHY. I—I—of course.

CLINTON. I've learned a great deal about you this morning I wish I had known before. You'll pardon me if I ask—do you care for my son enough to marry him?

DOROTHY. Oh, no, no.

CLINTON. He wants to marry you.

DOROTHY. (*Scornfully*) He told you that?

CLINTON. Not half an hour ago. He's coming back to tell you himself.

DOROTHY. (*On her feet*) I won't see him.

CLINTON. (*Rises*) You sha'n't do anything you don't want to do. But I want you to know—if my son has made any promise that you want him to keep—I'll see that he keeps it.

DOROTHY. No, no, I was only a silly girl who had her head turned. Your son owes me nothing. I am in his debt, for he has taught me to discriminate between the real and the false.

CLINTON. I feel you're acting very generously. In what I'm going to say I want you to feel that I'm trying to act as generously toward you.

DOROTHY. I will.

CLINTON. Thank you. (*Turns toward wall*) Your friend has a motto, "I Don't Give Advice."

DOROTHY. Don't you think that's a foolish motto?

CLINTON. Just now I do, because I want you to take my advice. I want to make up to you for any heartache my son may have caused you. You'll believe me—trust me?

DOROTHY. Yes.

CLINTON. I'll never forget the way you're taking this, Miss Webb, after the way my son has acted.

DOROTHY. You forget—I've heard for months what a wonderful father he has.

CLINTON. He never favors me with that idea.

DOROTHY. (*Archly*) Perhaps—he doesn't want to make you conceited.

CLINTON. Perhaps! Has Annie told you about our mix-up over the land sale?

DOROTHY. Everything. (*Enthusiastically*) Isn't Mr. Blake wonderful?

CLINTON. (*Taken completely aback*) Well—well—from a romantic standpoint—

DOROTHY. (*Romantically, earnestly*) You can't be expected to understand. Probably you know—

Mr. Blake was very fond of me. He lost a great deal of money through me—I treated him shamefully. But after your son and I had our misunderstanding, I realized that I had always loved John. Something he said this morning made me believe he didn't care for me any more. Then—he does this. It was only pride made him act as he did—he does love me. I'd rather be sure of that than have him make a million dollars.

CLINTON. You're right, little girl. That's just how I'd like a daughter of mine to feel. But—you say Mr. Blake lost a great deal of money through you.

DOROTHY. Yes, just through my foolish stubbornness.

CLINTON. You don't want him to go on all his life doing that?

DOROTHY. Oh, no.

CLINTON. Then wouldn't it be fine if you could be the means of his making a great deal of money?

DOROTHY. I know what you mean. (*Shakes her head*) John will never see it that way.

CLINTON. Not—if you helped him to see it *our* way?

DOROTHY. *Our* way?

CLINTON. Yes. Of course you're proud of him, but if you hadn't found out about me until after you were married, you wouldn't have returned the money. Knowing my son showed you that you loved the other man. Knowing I was the father has made the other man learn he loves you. Won't you do something for me in return?

DOROTHY. You—you make it sound very plausible.

CLINTON. Because I'm talking sense, and you're a sensible little girl. Won't you do this—as a peace offering between me and you?

DOROTHY. You're sure DeWitt wants to marry me?

CLINTON. Positively.

DOROTHY. He wasn't entirely to blame—I want to be fair to everyone——

CLINTON. I'm sure you do.

DOROTHY. I can't promise anything, Mr. Clinton, but—I'll try.

CLINTON. I'm willing to risk the answer.

DOROTHY. It may take some time.

CLINTON. Say—a month?

DOROTHY. (*Smiles confidently*) Yes—I think—I can manage it—in a month.

CLINTON. I'll never forget this.

ANNIE. (*Rushes in R.U. excitedly*) Quick—your son's coming back—alone.

DOROTHY. Please—I'd rather not see him.

CLINTON. You sha'n't. Pettingill has my address. I shall expect a telegram in a month.

ANNIE. Is there going to be a wedding?

CLINTON. I'm praying for two. (*Suddenly takes her in his arms*) Annie, I'm going to copy the custom of Elmville. (*Kisses ANNIE.*)

ANNIE. (*Laughs*) It's a wedding custom, too.

CLINTON. I wouldn't miss that wedding—— (*To DOROTHY, taking her hand*) Little girl, the only thing that's wrong with this whole affair is that my son isn't John.

(*Noise heard off R.U.*)

CLINTON. In there, both of you, quick.

(*They run across into L.U., as the R.U. door opens and DEWITT enters.*)

CLINTON. (*Angrily*) I thought I told you to keep out of here.

DEWITT. Father, I've come back to have an un-

derstanding with you. I'm of age. I won't stand having a keeper.

CLINTON. Where's Pettingill?

DEWITT. Up the street. I fooled him with the old trick of a tire that needed fixing. I've come here to ask a girl to marry me, and I'm not going to leave until I've seen her.

CLINTON. Oh, yes, you are.

DEWITT. I tell you——

CLINTON. (*Quietly*) I've met the girl.

DEWITT. I don't care if you don't think she's good enough for me——

CLINTON. She's so much too good I wouldn't let her marry you if she would.

DEWITT. You're a fine kind of a father.

CLINTON. (*Lays his hand on DEWITT's shoulder, and speaks almost tenderly*) No, my boy. I'm not. Three months ago you could have married that girl. Am I right?

DEWITT. Yes—but I didn't know then——

CLINTON. My son, if you had a chance to marry a girl like that, and didn't, there's something wrong with the way I've brought you up.

DEWITT. Then why won't you give me the chance now?

CLINTON. Because she loves someone else.

DEWITT. That boob—Blake?

CLINTON. I'll ask nothing more of you than to grow to be another John Blake.

DEWITT. You'll wait a long time for that.

CLINTON. I'm a patient man. When I think of the daughter-in-law I might have had, and that I've lost through you—my boy, your training begins from to-day. You report to the office Monday.

DEWITT. I'm starting on a hunting trip Monday.

CLINTON. First lesson—obedience. I'm engaging you from to-day at a salary of a hundred dollars a month.

DEWITT. You're crazy.

CLINTON. Second lesson—respect. You may begin your duties by driving me to the office. (*Crossing toward door R.U.*)

DEWITT. (*Follows him, protesting*) But, Father, you allow me a hundred dollars a week now.

CLINTON. That's where *I* need a lesson. When I think of the daughter-in-law I might have had— young man, I'm letting you off easy.

DEWITT. But a hundred——

CLINTON. (*Putting his arm around his shoulder*) From to-day there's going to be less money, and more comradeship between you and me. On to the office. (*They exit R.U., closing door.*)

(ANNIE and DOROTHY enter L.U., cross down to c.)

ANNIE. (*Ecstatically*) So he wanted to marry you. Isn't it exciting?

DOROTHY. Annie, think if he had asked me two months ago I would have said "yes," and found out, too late, that it was John I loved, after all.

ANNIE. When are you going to ask him about that land?

DOROTHY. I'm not thinking of the land. Are you sure he still cares for me?

ANNIE. You know—he refused two hundred and fifty thousand. Doesn't that prove how crazy he is?

DOROTHY. I know—but I want to hear him say it.

ANNIE. Stay here long enough—you will. (*Pushes her in chair c., behind her, as JOHN enters from R.U.*)

JOHN. I sold that house, Annie.

ANNIE. I'll go to the bank.

JOHN. (*Sees DOROTHY*) I'll go. You two will have a lot to talk over.

ANNIE. (*Grabs up her hat and bankbook*) Wait for me, Dorothy.

DOROTHY. (*Rises, nervously*) I'll go with you.

ANNIE. You'll stay here. Our bank account needs replenishing. (*Exits R.U. quickly.*)

DOROTHY. I told Percy I'd meet him.

JOHN. (*Placing chair c. for her, both sit*) He'll wait. (*Pause for a moment*) I saw the Clintons driving away. I hope it's the last we ever see of them.

DOROTHY. I met his father. I—I liked him.

JOHN. He seemed all right. Must be something wrong with him, though, to have a son like that.

DOROTHY. People said the same thing about my father, when Percy was wild for awhile.

JOHN. Well, they've gone. What's the use of thinking any more about them?

DOROTHY. We must talk of them. I—I know about that land. It was very foolish of you to do as you did.

JOHN. (*Hurt*) I thought you'd understand.

DOROTHY. I—I think it was wonderful of you. But I can't have you do this for me. There is no reason why you should.

JOHN. Suppose we call it—an old man's whim.

DOROTHY. You promised me you wouldn't say that.

JOHN. I won't—again.

DOROTHY. John, a long time ago I took your advice. Won't you take mine—once?

JOHN. Sorry. I must stand by my motto. "I Don't Take Advice."

DOROTHY. I think it's too foolish for words. (*Rising.*)

JOHN. (*Rising*) You're the one who taught me how wise they are.

DOROTHY. But think of Percy—and how wonderfully that advice turned out.

JOHN. Think of our tea room—and how wonderfully that didn't turn out.

DOROTHY. Think of my tea room on Fifth Avenue—the trouble I brought on myself because I didn't take your advice.

JOHN. Think of the Tillinghasts—how nearly they wrecked their lives by taking my advice.

DOROTHY. I met Minerva to-day—happy again because she did take it.

JOHN. You're only proving what I've learned—don't take any chances by giving it.

DOROTHY. I wish you wouldn't say that.

JOHN. Why?

DOROTHY. Because I—I want your advice.

JOHN. Of course—if an old friend can help you—

DOROTHY. My brother wants me to go West with him.

JOHN. (*Turns quickly*) That's ridiculous. Percy means all right, but a fine time you'd have, playing second fiddle to a sister-in-law you've never seen.

DOROTHY. She has an awfully attractive face.

JOHN. Did you ever live with a newly married couple?

DOROTHY. No. Did you?

JOHN. (*Smiles broadly*) No—o—but I can guess how pleasant it would be for the third party.

DOROTHY. There's something else I can do.

JOHN. What?

DOROTHY. I—I can marry.

JOHN. Who?

DOROTHY. DeWitt.

JOHN. (*Takes her hands*) Dorothy—I—I—I've stopped giving advice. But there's one thing I want you to promise me.

DOROTHY. Tell me what it is.

JOHN. No, I want you to trust me, to promise me before I tell you.

DOROTHY. There's one thing I want you to promise me.

JOHN. I can guess yours.

DOROTHY. I'll promise you if you'll promise me.

JOHN. Anything?

DOROTHY. Anything—if you'll do the same.

JOHN. (*Pause*) I know what yours is—I never thought I could bring myself to do it—but if you'll promise me—I'll promise you.

DOROTHY. Tell me first.

JOHN. No, you.

(DOROTHY *hesitates for a moment, then both speak together.*)

JOHN and DOROTHY. Marry me. (*They start apart with a gasp*) Oh! (*Then into each other's arms.*)

CURTAIN

The floor plan is divided into two main sections by a dashed line labeled "AISLE".

Left Section (Top):

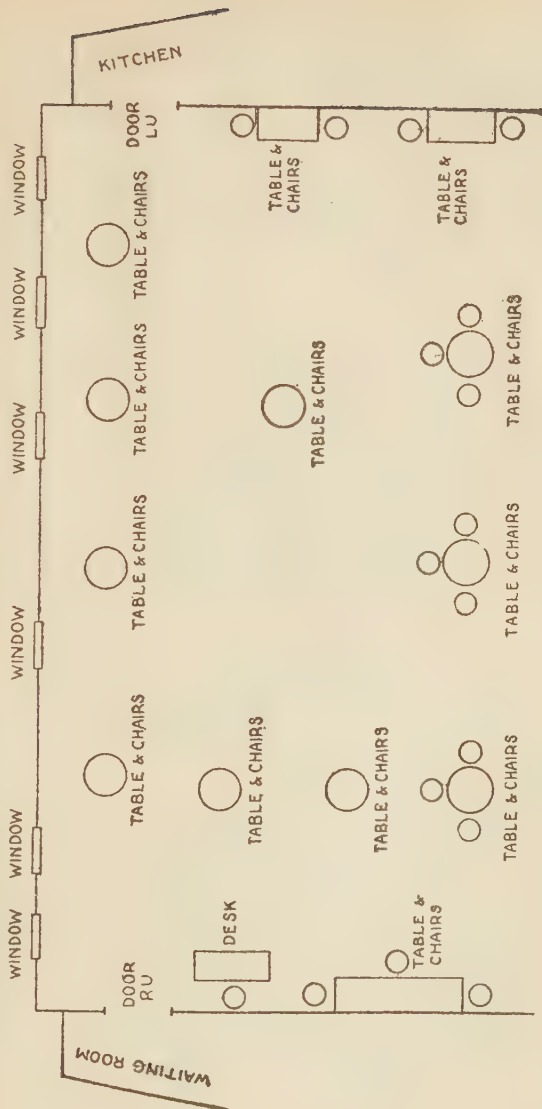
- Contains an "OFFICE" at the top left.
- A "DOOR 2 R" (Right) is located below the office.
- A "CHAIR" is represented by a circle to the left of the door.
- Two "CLOTHES RACK" units are positioned vertically in the center.
- A "WINDOW R" (Right) is on the right wall.

Right Section (Bottom):

- A "DOOR C" (Center) is at the top right, opening into the aisle.
- A "WINDOW L" (Left) is on the left wall.
- A "CLOTHES RACK" is positioned vertically below the window.
- A "MIRROR" is shown on the left wall.
- A "DRESSING TABLE" is located below the mirror.
- A "PITTING ROOM" is a rectangular area on the right side, with a "DOOR" at its bottom.
- A "TABLE OR COUNTER" is located below the dressing table.
- A "COUNTER" is at the bottom left of the section.
- Three "CHAIR" units (circles) are arranged vertically on the left side.

SCENE DESIGN ACT I
IF I WERE YOU

STREET DROP



NOTE CHANGE IN MANUSCRIPT
FOR ACT 3

SCENE DESIGN ACT 2ND 3
"IF I WERE YOU"

KICK IN

Play in 4 acts. By Willard Mack. 7 males, 5 females. 2 interiors. Modern costumes. Plays $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours.

"Kick In" is the latest of the very few available mystery plays. Like "Within the Law," "Seven Keys to Baldpate," "The Thirteenth Chair," and "In the Next Room," it is one of those thrillers which are accurately described as "not having a dull moment in it from beginning to end." It is a play with all the ingredients of popularity, not at all difficult to set or to act; the plot carries it along, and the situations are built with that skill and knowledge of the theatre for which Willard Mack is known. An ideal mystery melodrama, for high schools and colleges. (Royalty, twenty-five dollars.) Price, 75 Cents.

TILLY OF BLOOMSBURY

("Happy-Go-Lucky.") A comedy in 3 acts. By Ian Hay. 9 males, 7 females. 2 interior scenes. Modern dress. Plays a full evening.

Into an aristocratic family comes Tilly, lovable and youthful, with ideas and manners which greatly upset the circle. Tilly is so frankly honest that she makes no secret of her tremendous affection for the young son of the family; this brings her into many difficulties. But her troubles have a joyous end in charmingly blended scenes of sentiment and humor. This comedy presents an opportunity for fine acting, handsome stage settings, and beautiful costuming. (Royalty, twenty-five dollars.)

Price, 75 Cents.

BILLY

Farce-comedy in 3 acts. By George Cameron. 10 males, 5 females. (A few minor male parts can be doubled, making the cast 7 males, 5 females.) 1 exterior. Costumes, modern. Plays $2\frac{1}{4}$ hours.

The action of the play takes place on the S. S. "Florida," bound for Havana. The story has to do with the disappearance of a set of false teeth, which creates endless complications among passengers and crew, and furnishes two and a quarter hours of the heartiest laughter. One of the funniest comedies produced in the last dozen years on the American stage is "Billy" (sometimes called "Billy's Tombstones"), in which the late Sidney Drew achieved a hit in New York and later toured the country several times. (Royalty, twenty-five dollars.) Price, 75 Cents.

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